THE

SCOTTISH CHIEFS,

A ROMANCE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY MISS JANE PORTER,

AUTHOR OF THADDEUS OF WARSAW, AND REMARKS ON SIDNEY'S APHORISMS.

There comes a voice that awakes my soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they roll before me with all their deeds.

OSSIAN.

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1811.

J. M'Creery, Printer,
Black-Horse-Court, Fleet-Street,
London.

CONTENTS OF THE CHAPTERS

IN THE

THIRD VOLUME.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	*Cambus-Kenneth*	1
II.	*Stirling Castle*	21
III.	*The Citadel*	59
IV.	*The Carse of Stirling*	80
V.	*Snawdoun*	97
VI.	*Stirling Castle, the Council-hall*	126
VII.	*The Governor's Apartments* .	144
VIII.	*The State Prison*	167
IX.	*Chapel in Snawdoun*	179
X.	*The Carse of Stirling*	207
XI.	*The Cheviots*	220
XII.	*Lochmaben Castle*	239
XIII.	*Lammington*	254

CHAP.		PAGE
XIV.	*Loch-awe*	287
XV.	*Stanmore*	312
XVI.	*Snawdoun*	334
XVII.	*Stirling*	361
XVIII.	*Banks of the Forth*	373

THE

SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

CHAP. I.

WALLACE, having disposed part of his men in commanding posts around the town, went forward with his chosen troops towards the place where, from the information of his scouts, he deemed it most likely he should intercept De Warenne. He took his position upon an advantageous ground about half a mile from Stirling, near to the abbey of Cambus-Kenneth. The Forth lay before him, crossed by a wooden bridge, over which the enemy must pass to reach him, as the river was not in that part fordable.

The timbers which supported this bridge, he ordered to be sawed at the bottom; but not displaced in the least, that they might stand perfectly firm for so long as he should deem it necessary. To these were fastened strong cords; all of which were intrusted to some of his sturdiest Lanerkers, who lay concealed amongst the flags. These preparations being made, he drew up his troops in order of battle. Kirkpatrick and Murray commanded the flanks. In the centre stood Wallace himself, with Ramsay on one side of him, and Edwin with Scrymgeour on the other, awaiting with steady expectation the approach of the enemy, who, by this time, he knew could not be far distant.

Cressingham, from the information he had received, was also as well aware of the advance of De Warenne; and burning with malice against Wallace, and earnest to redeem the favour of De Valence by some act in his behalf, (having

left certain orders with his lieutenant) he went alone to an avenue of escape that was never divulged to any but to the commanders of the fortress; and there, by the light of a torch, making his way through a passage that was bored in the rock, he emerged at its western base, screened from sight by the surrounding bushes. He had wisely arrayed himself in a shepherd's dress, in case of being observed by the enemy; but fortune favoured him; and unseen he crept along through the thickets, till he came up with the advance of De Warenne's army on the skirts of Tor wood.

Having missed Wallace in West Lothian, where he expected to find him, De Warenne divided his army into three divisions, to enter Stirlingshire by different routes, hoping by that means, certainly to intercept him in one of them. The Earl of Montgomery led the first, of twenty thousand men; Baron Hilton the second, of ten thousand; and De Warenne himself, the third, of thirty thousand.

It was the first of these divisions that Cressingham encountered in Tor wood; revealing himself to Montgomery, he recounted how rapidly Wallace had gained the town, and in what jeopardy stood the citadel if he were not instantly attacked. The earl advised waiting for a junction with Hilton or the Lord Warden, "which," said he, "must happen in the course of a few hours."

"In the course of a few hours," returned Cressingham, "you will have no Stirling castle to defend. The enemy will seize it at sunset, in pursuance of the very agreement by which I warded him off, to give us time to annihilate him before that hour. Therefore no hesitation, if we would not see him lock the gates of the north of Scotland upon us, even when we have the power to hurl him to perdition."

By arguments such as these, the young earl was induced to give up his judgment; and accompanied by Cressingham,

whose courage revived amid such a host, he proceeded to the southern bank of the Forth.

The troops of Wallace were drawn up on the opposite shore, hardly five thousand strong; but so disposed that the enemy could not calculate their numbers: yet, the narrowness of their front, suggested to Cressingham that they could not be very numerous, as he must have left forces to occupy the outworks of the town and the citadel. "It will be easy to surround the rebel," cried he, "and that we may effect our enterprise, before the arrival of the Warden robs us of the honour, let us about it directly, and cross the bridge!"

Montgomery replied, that he thought a herald ought to be sent to inform Wallace, that besides the long line of troops he saw, De Warenne was advancing with double hosts: and therefore if he would now surrender, a pardon should be granted to him in the King's name, for all his late

rebellions. Cressingham was vehement against this measure, but Montgomery being resolute, the messenger was dispatched.

In a few minutes he returned, and repeated to the Southron commanders the words of Wallace:—"Go," said he, "tell your masters, we came not here to treat for a pardon of what we shall never allow to be an offence: we came to assert our rights; and to set Scotland free. Till that is effected, all negotiation is vain. Let them advance, they will find us prepared."

"Then onward!" cried Montgomery; and spurring his steed, he led the way to the bridge: his eager soldiers followed, and the whole of his centre ranks passed over. The flanks advanced, and the bridge from end to end was filled with archers, cavalry, men-at-arms, and war-carriages; and Cressingham in the midst, was hallooing in proud triumph to those who occupied the rear of the straining beams; when the blast of a trumpet, sounded

from the till now silent and immoveable Scottish phalanx. It was re-echoed by shouts from behind the passing enemy—and in that moment the supporting piers of the bridge([a]) were pulled away, and the whole of its mailed throng were precipated into the stream.

The cries of the maimed, and the drowning, were joined by the terrific slogen of two bands of Scots; the one, with Wallace towards the head of the river; and the other under the command of Sir John Graham, (who had lain in ambuscade lower down, ready to assail the rear of the enemy the moment the bridge should fall) rushed upon the dismayed troops, attacked them with impetuosity; and sweeping all before them, drove those who fought on land, into the river; and those who had escaped the flood, to meet its waves again, a bleeding host.

In the midst of this conflict, which rather seemed a carnage than a battle, Kirkpatrick, having heard the proud

shouts of Cressingham on the bridge, now sought him amidst its shattered timbers, with the ferocity of a fiend thirsting for blood. He ran from man to man, as the struggling wretches emerged from the water: he plucked them from the surge; but even while his glaring eye-balls and uplifted axe threatened destruction, he only looked on them; and with imprecations of disappointment, rushed forward on his chase. Almost in despair that the waves had cheated his revenge, he was hurrying in another direction, when he perceived a body moving through a hollow on his right. He turned, and saw the object of his search crawling amongst the mud and sedges.

"Ha!" cried Kirkpatrick with a voice of thunder: "Art thou yet mine?—Damned, damned villain!" cried he, springing upon his breast: "Behold the man you dishonoured—Behold the hot cheek which your dastard hand dared pollute!—Thy blood shall obliterate the

stain;—and then Kirkpatrick may again front the proudest in Scotland!"

"For mercy!" cried the horror-struck Cressingham; struggling with almost preternatural strength to extricate himself.

"Hell would be my portion, did I grant any to thee," cried Kirkpatrick; and with one stroke of his axe, he severed his head from his body. "I am a man again!" shouted he, as he held its bleeding veins in his hand, and placed it on the point of his sword. "Thou ruthless priest of Moloch and of Mammon, thou shalt have thine own blood to drink, while I shew my general how proudly I am avenged!" As he spoke, he dashed amongst the victorious ranks; and reached Wallace at the very moment he was extricating himself from his fallen horse, which a random arrow from the opposite shore had killed. Murray at the same instant was bringing up the wounded Montgomery, who came to surrender his sword, and to beg quarter for his men!

The earl turned deadly pale, as the first object that struck his sight was the fierce knight of Torthorald, walking under a stream of blood which continued to flow from the ghastly head of Cressingham, as he held it triumphantly in the air.

"If that be your chief!" cried Montgomery; "I have mistaken him much—I cannot yield my sword to him."

Murray understood him:—"If cruelty be an evil spirit," returned he, "it has fled every breast in this army, to shelter with Sir Roger Kirkpatrick; and its name is Legion! *That* is my chief!" added he, pointing to Wallace with an evident consciousness of deriving honour from his command. The chieftain rose from the ground; and though dyed in the same ensanguined hue that had excited the abhorrence of Montgomery, yet it had been drawn from his own veins and those of his horse, and all of blood about him seemed to be on his garments; none was in his eyes; none in his heart, but

what warmed it to mercy, and to benevolence, for all mankind. His eye momentarily fell on the approaching figure of Kirkpatrick; who, waving the head in the air, blew from his bugle the triumphal notes of the Pryse,(b) and then cried aloud: "I have slain the tiger of Scotland! I have sent my brave Loch Doiners to case my target with his skin:(c) and when I strike its bossy sides, I will exclaim, "*So perishes my dishonour! So perish all the enemies of Scotland!*"

"And with the extinction of that breath, Kirkpatrick;" cried Wallace, looking sternly from the head to him; "let your fell revenge perish also. For your own honour, commit no indignities on the body you have slain.—Let us subdue our enemies, but not riot in their fall!"

"'Tis for you to conquer like a god!" cried Kirkpatrick; "I have felt as a man, and like a man I revenge. This head shall destroy even in death: it shall vanquish

its friends for me; for I will wear it like a Gorgon on my sword, to turn to stone every Southron who looks on it." As he spoke, he disappeared amongst the thickening ranks; and as the rejoicing Scots hailed him as he passed, Montgomery, struck to the heart by every shout of triumph, suffered Murray to lead him to the scene of his humility.

The ever-comprehensive eye of Wallace perceived him as he advanced; and guessing by his armour and dignified demeanour, who he was; with a noble grace he raised his helmet from his head, as the earl approached him. Montgomery looked on him; he felt his soul even more subdued than his arms; but still there was something about a soldier's heart that shrunk from yielding his power of resistance. The blood mounted into his before pale cheeks: he held out his sword in silence to the victor, for he could not bring his tongue to pronounce the word "*surrender.*"

Wallace understood the sign, and holding up his hand to a herald, the trumpet of peace was raised. It sounded :—and where the moment before was the horrid clash of arms, the yell of savage conquest, and direful cries for mercy, all was still as death. Not that death which has past; but that which is approaching. —None spoke; not a sound was heard but the low groans of the dying, who lay overwhelmed and perishing beneath the bodies of the slain, and the feet of the living.

The voice of Wallace rose from this dreary pause.—Its sound was ever the harbinger of glory, or of *good will to men.* —"Soldiers!" cried he, "God has given victory—let us shew our gratitude, by our moderation and mercy.—Gather the wounded into quarters, and bury the dead."—

Wallace then turned to the extended sword of the earl; he put it gently back with his hand: "Ever wear what you

honour;" said he; "but gallant Montgomery, when you next draw it, let it be in a better cause. Learn, brave earl, to discriminate between a warrior's glory, and his shame; between the defender of his country, and the unprovoked ravager of foreign states."

Montgomery blushed scarlet deep at these words; but it was not with resentment. He looked down for a moment: "Ah," thought he, "perhaps, I ought never to have drawn it here!"—Then raising his eyes to Wallace, he said—"Were you not the enemy of my King, who, though a conqueror, sanctions none of the cruelties that have been committed in his name; I would give you my hand before the remnant of his brave troops, whose lives you grant. But you have my heart: a heart that knows no difference between friend or foe, when the bonds of virtue would unite what only civil dissensions divide."

"Had your King possessed the virtues

you believe he does," replied Wallace, "my sword might have now been a pruning hook. But that is past! We are in arms for injuries received, and to drive out a tyrant: for, believe me, noble Montgomery, that monarch has little pretensions to virtue, who suffers the oppressors of his people, or of his conquests, to go unpunished. To connive at cruelty, is to practise it. And has Edward ever frowned on one of those despots, who, in his name, have, for these two years past, laid Scotland in blood and ashes?"

The appeal was too strong for Montgomery to answer: he felt its truth; and bowed, with an expression in his face that told more, than, as a subject of England, he dared declare.

The late awful silence was now turned into the clamorous activity of eager obedience. The prisoners were conducted to the rear of the town; while the major part of the troops, (leaving a detachment to unburthen the earth of its bleeding

load, crossed the river, higher up, at the ford; and came in front of Stirling, just as De Warenne's division appeared on the horizon like a moving cloud gilded by the now setting sun. At this sight, Wallace sent Edwin into the town with Lord Montgomery; and extending his line, prepared to bear down upon the approaching earl.

But the Lord Warden had received information which fought better for the Scots than a host of swords. When advanced a very little onward on the Carse of Stirling, one of his scouts, (who had seen Kirkpatrick with the bloody head of Cressingham on his sword,) met De Warenne; and related, that having approached the south side of the Forth, he had seen the remains of the slaughtered governor of Stirling, the river floating with dead bodies; and Southron soldiers flying on all sides, while the Scottish horns were blowing the notes of victory. From what he had learnt from the fu-

gitives, he also informed his lord, "that he had found it necessary to fly, for fear of being impeded in his return to him; as not only the town and citadel of Stirling had been taken by Sir William Wallace, but the two detachments under Montgomery and Hilton were both discomfited, and their leaders slain or taken."

At this intelligence, Earl de Warenne stood aghast: and while he was still doubting that such disgrace to King Edward's arms could be possible, two or three fugitives came up and witnessed to its truth: for one of them having been near Cressingham in the wood when he told Montgomery of the capture of De Valence; concluded that he meant the leader of the third division; and corroborating the scout's information of the two defeats, he added, (for terror magnified the objects of fear;) that the Scots' army was incalculable; but was so disposed by Sir William Wallace, as to

appear inconsiderable: that he might ensnare his enemies, by filling them with hopes of an easy conquest.

These accounts had already persuaded De Warenne to make a retreat: when Wallace, perceiving the confusion of his enemy's ranks, and that they seemed making a retrograde motion in no very good order, called his men to the attack; and while a stream of arrows from his archers poured upon them like hail, he bore down upon the vanguard with his pikemen, and sent Graham round by the wood to surprise the flanks. All was executed with promptitude; and the tremendous slogen of victory sounding from side to side, the terrified Southrons, before panic-struck, now threw away their arms to lighten themselves for escape; and dreadful would have been the slaughter, had not De Warenne, sensible that it is not the number of the dead but the terror of the living which gives the finishing stroke to conquest, and witness-

ing the effects of the panic, in the total disregard of all orders; to put an end to the useless carnage of his troops, sounded a parley.

The bugle of Wallace instantly answered it. De Warenne sent forward his herald. He offered to lay down his arms, provided he might be exempted from relinquishing the royal standard, and that he and his men might be permitted to return unmolested into England.

Wallace accepted the first article: granted the second; but added, that with regard to the third, he would accord with it on condition, That he, the Lord de Warenne, and the officers taken in his army, or in other engagements lately fought in Scotland, should be immediately exchanged for the like number of Scots he should name, who were prisoners in England; and that the common men of the army now about to surrender their arms, should take an oath never to serve again against Scotland.

These preliminaries being agreed to, the Lord Warden advanced at the head of his 30,000 troops; and first laying down his sword, which Wallace immediately returned to him, the officers and soldiers marched by with their heads uncovered, throwing down their weapons as they approached their conqueror. Wallace extended his line as the procession moved; for he had too much policy to shew his enemies that 30,000 men, had yielded, almost without a blow, to scarce 5,000. The oath was administered to each regiment, by heralds sent for that purpose round into the strath of Monteith; whither he directed the captured legions to assemble and refresh themselves by sleep, previous to their departure next morning for England. The privates thus disposed of, Wallace, (hoping that Hilton might also fall into his hands,) to release himself from the commanders also, told De Warenne that duty now called him away; but that every

respect should be paid them by the Scottish officers.

He then gave directions to Sir Alexander Ramsay; who, with a small detachment, escorted De Warenne and the rest of the noble prisoners to Stirling.

CHAP. II.

THE first prisoners being lodged behind the town; and the wounded Southrons carried into the abbey of Cambus-Kenneth, while those of the Scots were brought into Stirling; Edwin, perceiving that Montgomery was too faint from fatigue and loss of blood, to sit a horse, had him carried in a litter to Snawdoun, the ancient palace of the kings of Scotland in Stirling. The priests, who in Wallace's army not only exercised the Levitical but the good Samaritan's func-

tions, soon obeyed Edwin's orders; and he had the pleasure of witnessing the earl's wounds drest, and pronounced without danger.

Messengers had arrived from Wallace to his young knight, and to the other captains, in and about Stirling, to acquaint them with the surrender of De Warenne's army. Hence, no surprise was created in the breast of Montgomery, when he saw his commander enter the room as the prisoner of the illustrious Scot.

Montgomery held out his hand to the Lord Warden in silence, and with a flushed cheek.

"Blush not, my noble friend!" cried De Warenne, "these wounds speak more eloquently than a thousand tongues, the gallantry with which you maintained the sword that fate compelled you to surrender. But I, without a scratch! how can I meet the unconquered Edward? And yet it was not for myself I feared: my

brave and confiding soldiers were in all my thoughts. For, I saw that it was not to meet an army I led them; but against a whirlwind, a storm of war with which no strength that I commanded could contend."

While the English generals thus conversed, Edwin, whose impatient heart yearned to be again at the side of Wallace, gladly resigned the charge of his noble prisoner to Sir Alexander Ramsay; whose gentle courtesy of manners, he knew, would well supply the place of his divided spirit. Soon as he found a cessation in the conversation of the two earls, he drew near Montgomery to take his leave.

"Farewel, till we meet again!" said the young earl, pressing his hand: "You have been a friend rather than an enemy to me."

"Because," returned Edwin, "I follow the example of my general; who

would willingly be no man's enemy, but the friend of all mankind.

Warenne looked at him with surprise: "And who are you, who in that stripling form utter sentiments which might grace the maturest years?"

Edwin, with a sweet dignity, replied—"I am Edwin Ruthven, the adopted brother of Sir William Wallace."

"And the son of him," asked De Warenne, "who with Sir William Wallace, was the first to mount Dumbarton walls?"

At these words, the cheek of Edwin was suffused with a more animated bloom. At the moment when his courage was distinguished on the heights of Dumbarton by the vowed friendship of Wallace, he found himself beloved by the bravest and most amiable of beings, and in his light he felt both warmth and brightness: but this question of De Warenne, conveyed to him that he had found fame himself; that he was then publicly

acknowledged to be an object not unworthy of being called the brother of Sir William Wallace!—and casting down his eyes, beaming with exultation, from the fixed gaze of De Warenne, he answered: —I am that happy Ruthven, who had the honour to mount Dumbarton rock by the side of my general; and from his hand, there received the stroke of knighthood."

De Warenne rose, much agitated: "If such be the boys of Scotland, need we wonder when the spirit of resistance is roused in the nation, that our strength should wither before its men!"

"At least," said Montgomery, whose admiration of what had past, seemed to re-animate his before languid faculties; "it deprives defeat of its sting, when we are conscious that we yielded to a power that was irresistible. But, my lord," added he, "if the courage of this youth amazes you; what will you say ought to be the fate of this country, ought to be

the crown of Sir William Wallace's career, when you know by what a chain of brave hearts he is surrounded? Even tender woman loses the weakness of her sex when she belongs to him." Earl de Warenne, surprised at the energy with which he spoke, looked at him with an expression that told him so.—"Yes," continued he, "I witnessed the heroism of Lady Wallace, when, in the midst of an armed host, she defended the character of her husband, and preserved the secret of his retreat inviolate; I saw that loveliest of women whom the dastard Heselrigge slew."

"Disgrace to knighthood!" cried Edwin with indignant vehemence: "If you were spectator of that bloody deed, retire from this house; go to Cambus-Kenneth, any where; but leave this town before the injured Wallace arrives; blast not his eyes with a second sight of one who could have beheld his wife murdered."

Every eye was now fixed on the com-

manding figure of the young Edwin, who stood with the determination of being obeyed breathing in every look. De Warenne then at once saw the possibility of so gentle a creature being transformed into the soul of enterprise, into the fearless and effective soldier.

Lord Montgomery held out his hand to Edwin.—" By this right arm, I swear, noble youth, that had I been on the spot when Heselrigge lifted his sword against the breast of Lady Wallace, I would have sheathed my sword in his! It was not then I saw that matchless woman. Heselrigge, offended with my want of severity in the scrutiny I had made at Ellerslie a few hours before; sent me to Ayr. Arnulf quarrelled with me on the same subject; and I retired in disgust to England."

" Then, how?—you ought to be Sir Gilbert Hambledon?" said Edwin; " but whoever you are, as you were kind to the Lady Marion, I cannot but regret

my late hasty charge; and for which I beg your pardon?"

Montgomery took his hand and pressed it: "Generous Ruthven, your warmth is too honourable to need forgiveness.—I am that Sir Gilbert Hambledon; and had I remained so, I should not now be in Scotland. But in an interview with the Prince of Wales, on my accession to the earldom of Montgomery, he told me that it had been rumoured I was disloyal in my heart to my King: *and to prove*, said he, *the falsehood of your calumniators, I appoint you second in command to Earl de Warenne in the new expedition against Scotland.* To have refused to fight against Sir William Wallace, would have been to have accused myself of treason. And while I respected the husband of the murdered Lady Marion, I yet regarded him as an insurgent; and with the same spirit you follow him to the field, I obeyed the commands of my prince."

"Lord Montgomery!" returned Ed-

win, "I am rejoiced to meet one who proves to me, what my general, wronged as he has been, yet always inculcates—that all the Southrons are not base and cruel. When he knows who is indeed his prisoner, what recollections will it not awaken! Till you again meet I will not intimate to him the melancholy satisfaction he is to enjoy; for with the remembrances it will arouse, your presence must bring the antidote."

The brave youth, then telling Ramsay in what parts of the palace the rest of the lords were to be lodged, took his leave, and with recovered composure descended to the court-yard to take horse for Tor wood. He was galloping along under the bright light of the moon, when he heard a squadron on full speed approaching, and presently Murray appeared at its head. "Edwin," cried he, "I was coming to you. We are sent to demand the instant surrender of the citadel. Hil-

ton's division has surrendered, and we are complete masters of the field."

He then proceeded to relate that the baron came up about half an hour after Earl de Warenne had marched towards the town. Sir William Wallace immediately sent forward his heralds with the colours of De Valence and Montgomery, with the personal banner of De Warenne, and required him to lay down his arms. The sight of these standards was sufficient to assure Hilton that there was no deceit in the embassy: the nature of his position precluded retreat; and not seeing any reason for 10,000 men disputing the day with a power to whom 50,000 had just surrendered, he hesitated not to embrace the terms proposed.

The instant that Hilton put his argent banner into his victor's hand,(d) Wallace, impatient to apprize Lord Mar and his family of their safety; (as the castle must be his, since he had discomfited all who

would have maintained it against him;) sent off Murray with a considerable number of men, to demand its immediate surrender.

Murray gladly obeyed; and accompanied by Edwin, with the banners of Cressingham and De Warenne trailing in the dust, he arrived before the castle, and summoned the lieutenant to the walls. But that officer, well aware of what was going to happen, feared to appear.—He had seen from the battlements of the keep, the dreadful conflict on the banks of the Forth; he had seen the thousands of De Warenne pass before the conqueror; and he now believed, that in punishment for the treachery of Cressingham, in stealing out under the armistice, and breaking his word to surrender the citadel at sunset, that Wallace was come to put the whole garrison to the sword.

At the first sight of Murray's approaching squadron, the lieutenant, driven to the direst extremity, hurried to Lord Mar, to offer him his liberty, if he

would go forth to Wallace, and treat with him to spare the lives of the garrison. He had scarcely delivered his wishes to the Earl, (who, closed up in a solitary dungeon, knew nought of what had happened without; and who expected that his present re-entrance was to lead him to the death that had been twice averted) before he answered for Wallace in the most gracious manner. Indeed, the pale and trembling lieutenant had no sooner spoken the first word, than Mar discerned that it was a suppliant, not an executioner, he saw before him; and he was even promising that clemency from Wallace which he knew dwelt in his heart, when Murray's trumpet sounded.

The lieutenant started horror-struck on his feet: "It is now too late! I have not made the first overture; and there sounds the death-bell of this garrison!—I saved your life, Earl;" said he, turning more confidently to Mar; "when the enraged Cressingham commanded me to pull the

cord which would have launched you into eternity:—I disobeyed him!—For my sake, then, preserve this garrison, and accompany me to the ramparts."

The chains were immediately knocked off the limbs of Mar; and the lieutenant presenting him with a sword, they, together, approached the battlements. As the declining moon shone on their backs, Murray did not discern that it was his uncle who mounted the wall. But calling to him, in a voice which declared there was no appeal, pointed to the humbled colours of Edward, and demanded the instant surrender of the citadel.

"Let it be then with the pledge of Sir William Wallace's mercy?" cried the venerable Earl.

"With every pledge, Lord Mar," returned Murray, now joyfully recognising his uncle, "which you think safe to give."

"Then the keys of the citadel are

yours:" cried the lieutenant: "I only ask the lives of my garrison."

This was granted; and immediate preparations made for the admission of the Scots. As the enraptured Edwin heard the heavy chains of the portcullis drawing up, and the massy bolts of the huge doors grating in their guards, he thought of his mother's liberty, of his father's joy in pressing her again in his arms; and hastening to the tower where Lord Ruthven held watch over the now sleeping De Valence, he told him all that had happened: "Go, my father;" added he; "enter with Murray, and be the first to open the prison doors of my dearest mother."

Lord Ruthven embraced his son.—"My dear Edwin! this sacrifice to my feelings is worthy of you. But I have a duty to perform superior to even the tenderest private ones. I am planted here by my commander; and shall I quit my station for any gratification, till he

gives me leave? No, dear boy.—Be you my representative to your mother: and while my example teaches you, above all earthly considerations, to obey our general, your tender embraces will shew her what I sacrifice to duty."

Edwin no longer urged his father, but acquiescing in his orders, left his apartment, and flew to the gate of the inner ballium. It was open: and Murray already stood on the platform before the keep, receiving the keys of the garrison. The business of the surrender being over; "Now," said he to the lieutenant, "lead me to the ladies Mar and Ruthven, that I may assure them they are free."

"Blessed sight!" said the Earl to his nephew; "little could I expect, when at Bothwell I put the banner of Mar into your unpractised hand, that in the course of four months, I should see my brave Andrew receive the keys of proud Stirling from its commander!"

The gates of the keep were now un-

closed; and the lieutenant conducted his victors along a gloomy passage, to a low door studded with knobs of iron. As he drew the bolt, he said to Lord Mar, "These severities are the hard policy of Governor Cressingham."

He pushed the door slowly open, and discovered a small miserable cell, whose walls of rugged stone had no other covering than the incrustations which time and many a dripping winter had strewn over its vaulted sides. On the ground, on a pallet of straw, lay a female figure in a profound sleep. But the light which the lieutenant held, streaming full upon the uncurtained slumberer, she started, and with a shriek of terror at sight of so many armed men, discovered the pallid features of the Countess of Mar. The Earl, with an anguish which hardly the freedom he was going to bestow could ameliorate, rushed forward, and throwing himself beside her, caught her in his arms.

"Are we then to die?" cried she in a voice of horror: "Has Wallace abandoned us?—Are we to perish?—Heartless, heartless man!"

The Earl, overcome by the violence of his emotions, could only strain her to his breast in speechless agitation. Edwin, who saw a picture of his mother's sufferings in the present distraction of the Countess, felt his powers of utterance locked up: but Lord Andrew, whose ever-light heart was gay the moment he was no longer unhappy, jocosely answered; "My fair aunt, there are many hearts to die by your eyes, before that day! and meanwhile I come from Sir William Wallace to set you free!"

The name of Wallace, and the intimation that *he had sent to set her free*, drove every former thought of death and misery from her mind: again the ambrosial gales of love seemed to breathe around her: she saw not her prison walls; she felt herself again in his presence: and in a

blissful trance, into which the words of Murray had involved her, she rather endured than participated the warm congratulations of her husband on their mutual safety.

"Let us leave my aunt and uncle," whispered Murray to his cousin, "while we go and open the cages of our other pretty birds!"

Edwin eagerly acquiesced: and the lieutenant, who preceded them, stopping at the end of the gallery, said, "Lady Ruthven's habitation is not better than the Countess's." As he spoke he threw open the door, and discovered its sad inmate also asleep. But when the glad voice of Edwin pierced her ear; when his fond embraces clung to her bosom, her surprise and emotions were almost insupportable. Hardly crediting her senses, that he whom she had believed was safe in the cloisters of St. Columba, could be within the dangerous walls of Stirling; that it was his mailed breast that pressed

against her bosom; that it was his voice she heard exclaiming, "Mother we come to give you freedom!" all appeared to her like a dream of madness.

She listened, she felt him, she found her cheek wet with his rapturous tears: "Am I in my right mind?" cried she, looking at him with a fearful yet overjoyed countenance: "Am I not mad? O! tell me," cried she, turning to Murray and the lieutenant, "is this my son that I see, or has terror turned my poor brain?"

"It is indeed your son, your Edwin, my very self," cried he, alarmed at the expression of her voice and countenance. Murray now advanced, and kneeling down by her, gently took her hand. "He speaks truth, my dear madam. It is your son Edwin. He left his convent to be a volunteer with Sir William Wallace. He has covered himself with honour on the walls of Dumbarton; and here also, a sharer in his leader's victories, he is come to set you free."

At this explanation, which being givén in the sober language of reason, Lady Ruthven believed; she gave way to the full happiness of her soul, and falling on the neck of her son, embraced him with a flood of tears: "And thy father, Edwin! where is he? Did not the noble Wallace rescue him from Ayr?"

"He did, and he is here." Edwin then related to his mother the affectionate embassy of his father, and the particulars of his release. Murray, perceiving how happily they would be engaged, rose from his knees, and told the lieutenant to conduct him to Lady Helen.

His guide obeying, led him by a winding staircase into a stone gallery, where, letting Lord Andrew into a spacious apartment, divided in the midst by a vast screen of carved cedar-wood, he pointed to a curtained entrance:—"Within that chamber," said he, "is the Lady Helen."

"Ah, my poor cousin!" exclaimed Murray, "though she seems not to have

tasted the hardships of her parents, she has shared their misery I do not doubt!" As he spoke, the lieutenant, who remembered the charges he had received to treat Lady Helen with particular respect, retreated, and Murray entered alone. The chamber was magnificent, and illumined by a lamp which hung from the ceiling. He cautiously approached the bed, fearing too hastily to disturb her, and gently pulling aside the curtain, beheld vacancy. An exclamation of alarm had almost escaped him, when observing a half-open door at the other side of the apartment, he drew towards it, and there beheld his cousin with her back to him, kneeling before a crucifix. She spoke not, but the fervour of her action manifested how earnestly she prayed. He moved behind her, but she heard him not: her whole soul was absorbed in the success of her petition, and at last raising her clasped hands in a paroxysm of emotion, she exclaimed: "If that trumpet sounded the

victory of the Scots, then, Power of Goodness! receive thy servant's thanks. But if De Warenne have conquered where De Valence failed; if all whom I love be lost to me here, take me then to thyself; and let my freed spirit fly to their embraces in heaven!"

"Ay, and on earth too, thou blessed angel!" cried Murray, throwing himself towards her. She started from her knees, and with such a cry as the widow of Serepta uttered when she embraced her son from the dead, Helen threw herself on the bosom of her cousin, and closed her eyes in a blissful swoon—for even while every outward sense seemed fled, the impression of joy played about her heart; and the animated throbbings of that of Murray, while he pressed her in his arms, at last aroused her to recollection. Her glistening and uplifted eyes told all the happiness, all the gratitude of her soul. "My father?—All are safe?" demanded she: "All, my best beloved!"

answered Murray, forgetting, in the powerful emotions of his heart, that what he felt, and what he uttered, were beyond even a cousin's limits—"My uncle; the Countess; Lord and Lady Ruthven; all are safe."

"And Sir William Wallace?" cried she: "You do not mention him. I hope no ill—"

"No evil has happened to him," interrupted Murray; "he is conqueror here. He has subdued every obstacle between Berwick and Stirling, and he has sent me hither, to set you and the rest of the dear prisoners free."

Helen's heart throbbed with a new tumult as he spoke: she longed to ask whether the unknown knight from whom she had parted in the hermit's cell, had ever joined Sir William Wallace? She yearned to know that he yet lived. At the thought of the probability of his having fallen in some of these desperate conflicts, her soul seemed to gasp for existence;

and dropping her head on her cousin's shoulder: "Tell me, Andrew—" said she, and there she paused, with an emotion for which she could not account to herself.

"Of what would my sweet cousin inquire?" asked Murray, partaking her agitation.

"Nothing particular," said she, covered with blushes; "but did you fight alone in these battles? Did no other knight but Sir William Wallace?"

"Many, dearest Helen," returned Murray, enraptured at a solicitude which he appropriated to himself. "Many knights joined our arms. All fought in a manner worthy of their leader, and thanks to Heaven, none have fallen."

"Thanks indeed!" cried Helen; and with a hope, she dared hardly whisper to herself, of seeing the unknown knight in the gallant train of the conqueror, she said, "Now Andrew, lead me to my father."

Murray would perhaps have required a second bidding, had not Lord Mar, impatient to see his daughter, appeared with the Countess at the door of the apartment. Hastening towards them, she fell on the bosom of her father, and while she bathed his face and hands with her glad tears, he too wept, and mingled blessings with his caresses. No coldness here met his paternal heart: no distracting confusions tore her from his arms: no averted looks, by turns, alarmed and chilled the bosom of tenderness. All was innocence and duty in Helen's breast; and every ingenuous action shewed its affection and its joy. The estranged heart of Lady Mar had closed against him; and though he suspected not its wanderings, he felt the unutterable difference between the warm transports of his daughter, and the frigid gratulations forced from the lips of his wife.

Lady Mar gazed with a wierd frown on the lovely form of Helen, as she wound

her exquisitely turned arms around the Earl in filial tenderness: her bosom, heaving in the snowy whiteness of virgin purity; her face radiant with the softest blooms of youth: all seemed to frame an object, which malignant fiends had conjured up to blast her hopes. "Wallace will behold these charms!" cried her distracted spirit to herself, "and then, where am I?"

As her thoughts followed each other, she unconsciously glanced on Helen looks, which, if an evil-eye had any witching power, would have withered all her beauties. At one of these portentous moments, the glad eyes of Helen met hers: she started with horror. It made her remember how she had been betrayed, and all she had suffered from Soulis. But she could not forget that she had also been rescued; and with the thought, the image of her preserver rose before her. At this gentle idea, her alarmed countenance took a softer expression; but deep-

ly. sighing, both from the recollection of her step-mother's perfidy, and with a fear that she might repeat it; she turned to her father's question of "How did she come to be with Lady Ruthven, when he had been taught by Lord Andrew to believe that she was safe at Saint Fillan's?"

"Yes," cried Murray, throwing himself on a seat beside her, "I saw in your letter to Sir William Wallace that you had been betrayed by some traitor Scot from your asylum; and but for the fulness of my joy at our meeting, I should have inquired who that villain was?"

Lady Mar, who felt a deadly sickness at her heart on hearing that Sir William Wallace was so far acquainted with her daughter as to have received a letter from her, in despair, prepared to listen to what she expected would bring a death-stroke to her hopes. They had met—They wrote to each other! Then, far indeed had proceeded that communication of hearts which was the aim of her life—and she was undone!

Helen glanced at the face of Lady Mar, and observing its changes, regarded them as corroborations of her guilt. It was conscience accusing her of having intended to betray her daughter to Soulis at Bothwell; and bidding her prepare to hear how, in consequence, she had afterwards fallen into his hands!—“ If conscience disturbs you thus,” thought Helen, “ let it rend your heart with shame, and perhaps remorse may follow !”

As the tide of success seemed so full for the Scots, Helen no longer feared that her cousin would rashly seek a precarious vengeance on Soulis, when he might probably so soon have an opportunity of making it certain at the head of an army; and she therefore commenced her narrative from the time of Murray’s leaving her at the priory, and continued it to the hour when she met her father a prisoner in the streets of Stirling. As she proceeded, the indignation both of the Earl and of Murray against Soulis, was vehement; and the latter was full of im-

mediate personal revenge. But the Earl, with arguments similar to those which had suggested themselves to his daughter, calmed his nephew's rage; and saw him reseat himself with repressed, though burning resentment, to listen to the remainder of her relation.

The quaking conscience of Lady Mar did indeed vary her cheeks with a thousand dyes, when, as Helen repeated part of the conversation with Macgregor's wife, Murray abruptly said—"Surely that woman could name the traitor who would have betrayed us all into the hands of our enemies! Did she not hint it?"

Helen cast down her eyes, that even a glance might not overwhelm with insupportable shame the already trembling Countess. Lady Mar, seeing by her manner, that she was acquainted with her guilt; and expecting no more mercy, than she knew she would shew to Helen were she in the like circumstances with herself; hastily rose from her chair, in-

ternally vowing vengeance against her triumphant daughter, and hatred of all mankind.

While all the furies raged in the breast of this guilty woman, Helen, wishing to avoid mystery, and determined never to accuse her step-mother, (who she hoped might have erred from blind affection to her husband,) simply answered—"You do not think that Lord Soulis would be so weak as to trust a secret of that kind with a servant." And then hurrying the relation of subsequent events, the Countess breathed again; and almost deceiving herself with the hope that Helen was ignorant of her treachery, listened with emotions of another kind, when she heard of the rescue of her daughter-in-law. She saw Wallace in the brave act! But as Helen, undesignedly to herself, passed over the most interesting parts of their conversations, and never named the graces of his person; Lady Mar thought, that to have viewed Wallace with so little no-

tice would have been impossible; and, therefore, without surprise at her first suspicion being entirely removed, but at the same time glad of such a conviction that he and her daughter had never met, she heard Helen say that the unknown chief had promised to *join his arms with those of Wallace.*

Murray looked on Helen as she spoke, with an impression at his heart that made it pause. Something in this interview, had whispered to him what he had never dreamt before, that she was dearer to him than fifty thousand cousins; and while the blood flushed and retreated in the complexion of Helen, and her downcast eyes refused to shew what was passing there, as she hastily ran over the circumstances of her acquaintance with the stranger knight; his own emotions declared the secret of hers; and with a lip as pale as her own, he said—"But where is this brave man? He cannot have yet joined us; for surely he would have told

Wallace or myself that he came from you!"

"I warned him not to do so," replied she; "for fear that your indignation against my enemies, my dear cousin, might have precipated you into dangers inimical to the duty you owe your country."

"Then if he have joined us," replied Murray, rising from his seat, "you will probably soon know who he is. To-morrow morning Wallace means to remove my uncle and his family into Snawdoun. He will therefore, at a very early hour, enter this citadel attended by his principal knights, to lodge his prisoners of rank here; and in his train you will doubtless discover the man who has laid such obligations on us all by your preservation. Glad shall I be to have an opportunity of expressing my gratitude."

Murray's feelings told him that glad should he be, if that gratitude would repay him; if the confusion of Helen when

she mentioned him, did not arise from the conscious remembrance of some tenderer communion, than the mere act of her rescue!

Helen herself, knew not how to account for the agitation which shook her whenever she adverted to her unknown preserver. At the time of the hermit's friend, (the good lay-brother,) attending her to Alloa; when she explained to Lady Ruthven the cause of her strange arrival, she told her story with composure till she mentioned her deliverer; then, for the first time, she felt a confusion that disordered the animation with which she described his patriotism and his bravery. But it was natural, she thought; gratitude for a recent benefit made her heart beat high. It was something like the enthusiasm she had felt for Wallace, on the rescue of her father, and she was satisfied. When a few days of quiet at Alloa, had composed her feelings, and recovered her health from the shock it had received

in the recent scenes, she proposed to her aunt to send some trusty messenger to inform the imprisoned Earl at Dumbarton, of her happy refuge. Lady Ruthven suggested the impropriety of such a project; urging the probability that the messenger would be intercepted, and so her asylum be discovered. "Let it alone," continued she, "till this knight of yours, by performing his word, and giving freedom to your father, calls you to declare his honourable deeds. Till then, Lord Mar, ignorant of your danger, needs no assurance of your safety."

This casual reference to the knight, made the before tranquil heart of Helen renew its throbbings; and turning from her aunt with an acquiescing reply, she retired to her own apartment to quell the unusual and painful blushes she felt burning on her cheeks. Why she should feel thus, she could not account, "Unless," said she to herself, "I fear that my suspicion may be guessed at. Should my

words or looks betray the royal Bruce to any harm, that moment of undesigned ingratitude would be the last of my life."

This explanation seemed an ample apology to herself. And henceforth, avoiding all mention of her preserver in her conversations with Lady Ruthven, she confined the subject to her own breast: and thinking that she thought of him more, by her attention to speak of him less, she wondered not that whenever she was alone, his image immediately rose in her mind; his voice seemed to sound in her ears; and even as the summer air wafted its soft fragrance over her cheek, she would turn, as if she felt that breath which had so gently hushed her to repose. She would then start and sigh, and repeat his words to herself: but all was then serene in her bosom. It seemed as if the contemplation of so much loveliness of soul in so beautiful a form, soothed instead of agitating her heart. "What a king will he be!" thought she: "with

what transport would the virtuous Wallace, set the Scottish crown on so noble a brow."

Such were her meditations and feelings when she was brought a prisoner to Stirling. And when she heard of the victories of Wallace, she could not but think that the brave arm of her knight was there; and that he, with the more renowned champion of Scotland, would fly on the receipt of her letter to Stirling, there to repeat the valiant deeds of Dumbarton. The first blast of the Scottish trumpet under the walls, found her, as she had said, upon her knees, and kept her there; for hardly with any intermission, with fast and prayer, did she kneel before the altar of Heaven,—till the voice of Andrew Murray, at midnight, called her to freedom and to happiness.

Wallace, and perhaps her nameless hero with him, had again conquered!—His idea dwelt in her heart, and faltered on her tongue; and yet, in reciting the

narrative of her late sufferings to her father, when she came to the mentioning of the stranger's conduct to her,—with embarrassment she felt her augmented emotions as she drew near the subject; and hurrying over the event; she could only excuse herself for such perturbation, by supposing that the former treason of Lady Mar excited her alarm, for fear she would now fix on a new object. Turning cold at an idea pregnant with such horror, she hastily passed from so agitating a theme, to speak of De Valence and the respect with which he had treated her during her imprisonment. His courtesy had professed to deny nothing to her wishes, but her personal liberty and any conference with her parents and aunt. Her father's life, he said, was altogether out of his power to grant.—He might suspend the sentence, but he could not abrogate it.

"Yes;" cried the Earl; "though false and inflexible, I must not accuse him of

having been so barbarous in his tyranny as Cressingham. For it was not until De Valence was taken prisoner, that Joanna and I were divided. Till then we were lodged in decent apartments: but on that event, Cressingham tore us from each other, and threw us into different dungeons. My sister Janet, I have never seen since the hour we were separated in the street of Stirling; excepting the few awful minutes in which we met on the roof of this castle, when I expected to see her and my wife die before my eyes."

Helen, now, for the first time, learnt the base cruelties which had been exercised on her father and his family since the capture of De Valence. She had been exempted from sharing them, by the fears of Cressingham, who, knowing that the English earl had particular views with regard to her, durst not risk offending him by outraging one whom he had declared himself determined to protect.

Murray, during part of this conversa-

tion, withdrew to bring Lady Ruthven and her son to share the general joy of full domestic reunion.—The happy Edwin and his mother having embraced these dear relatives, with yet more tender affections yearning in their bosoms, accompanied Murray to the door of the barbacan which contained Lord Ruthven. They entered, on the wings of conjugal and filial love; and the, for once, pensive Lord Andrew, returned into the castle, to see that all was safely disposed for the remainder of the night.

CHAP. III.

SOON after sun rise, next morning, Murray received a message from Wallace, desiring him to tell the Earl of Mar that he was coming to the citadel to offer the

palace of Snawdoun to the ladies of Mar; and to request the Earl to take charge of the illustrious prisoners he was bringing to the castle.

Lord Mar, (whose wounds were now healed;) felt new vigour at this intimation; and hastening to prepare for the reception of his brave friend, he sent to the apartments of his wife and daughter, and to Lady Ruthven (who had returned from her husband) to inform them of his expected visitant.

They all rose to meet an interview that excited different expectations in each different breast. Lady Mar, well satisfied that Helen and Wallace had never met; and clinging to the vague words of Murray, that he had sent to give *her* liberty; called forth every art of the toilet to embellish her still fine person. Lady Ruthven, with the respectable eagerness of a chaste matron, in prospect of seeing the man who had so often been the preserver of her brother, and who had so

lately delivered her husband from a loathsome dungeon, was the first who joined the Earl in the great gallery. Lady Mar, soon after entered like Juno, in all her plumage of majesty and beauty.

But the trumpet of Wallace had sounded in the gates, before the trembling, half-fainting Helen could leave her room. It was the herald of his approach; and she sunk breathless into a seat. She was now going to see, for the first time, the man whose woes she had so often wept; the man who had incurred them all for objects dear to her. He whom she had mourned as one stricken in sorrows; and feared for as an outlaw, doomed to suffering and to death; was now to appear before her, not in the garb of woe which excuses the sympathy its wearer excites, but arrayed as a conqueror; as the champion of Scotland, giving laws to her oppressors; and entering in triumph over fields of their slain!

Awful as this picture was to the timidity

of her gentle nature, it alone did not occasion that inexpressible sensation which seemed to check the pulses of her heart. Was she, or was she not, to see in his train, the young and noble Bruce? Was she to be assured that he still existed? Or, by seeking him every where in vain, be ascertained that he, who could not break his word, had perished lonely and unknown?

While these ideas thronged into her mind, the platform below was filling with the triumphant Scots; and her door suddenly opening, Edwin entered in delighted haste:—"Come, cousin!" cried he; "Sir William Wallace has almost finished his business in the great hall. He has made my uncle governor of this place, and has committed nearly a thousand prisoners of rank to his care. If you be not expeditious, you will allow him to enter the gallery before you."

As he spoke, hardly observing her face, from the happy emotions which

dazzled his eyes, he seized her hand. Summoning a sudden resolution, she obeyed its impulse; and was led by Edwin into the gallery.

Her aunt and step-mother only were there. Lady Ruthven sat composedly on a long tapestried bench, awaiting the arrival of the company. But Lady Mar was near the door, listening impatiently to the voices beneath. At sight of Helen she drew back; but she smiled exultingly when she saw that all that splendour of beauty she had lately beheld, and so dreaded, was fled. Her unadorned garments gave no particular attraction to the simple lines of her form: the effulgence of her complexion was gone; her cheek was pale; and the tremulous motion of her step deprived her of that elastic grace which was the peculiar charm of her nymph-like figure.

Triumph now sat in the eyes of the Countess; and with an air of authority she waved Helen to take a seat beside

Lady Ruthven. But Helen, fearful of what might be her emotion when the train should enter, had just placed herself behind her aunt, when the steps of many a mailed foot sounded upon the stone gallery. The next moment the great doors in the oaken screen opened, and a crowd of knights, in armour, flashed upon her eyes. A dimness overspread her faculties; and nothing appeared to her but an indistinct throng approaching. She would have given worlds to have been removed from the spot, but was unable to stir; and her recovering senses beheld Lady Mar, (who, exclaiming "Ever my preserver!" had hastened forward,) now leaning on the bosom of one of the chiefs:—his head was bent as if answering her in a low voice. By the golden locks which hung down upon the jewelled tresses of the Countess, and obscured his face, she judged it was indeed the deliverer of her father, the knight of her dream. But

where was he who had delivered herself from a worse fate than death? Where was the dweller of her daily thoughts—ay, and of her nightly ones too?

Helen's sight, now clearing to as keen a vision as before it had been dulled and indistinct, with a timid and anxious gaze glanced from face to face of the chieftains around; but all were strange: and withdrawing her eyes with a sad conviction that their search was indeed in vain, in the moment of despair they were arrested by a glimpse of the features of Wallace: he raised his head; he shook back his clustering hair, and her secret was revealed. In that godlike countenance, she recognised the object of her devoted wishes; and with a gasp of overwhelming surprise which denied all louder utterance, she would have fallen from her seat, had not Lady Ruthven, hearing a sound like the sigh of death from her niece, turned round and caught her in her arms. The alarmed cry of Lady Ruthven, drew every

eye to the spot. Wallace immediately relinquished the Countess to her husband, and moved towards the beautiful and senseless form that lay on the bosom of Lady Ruthven. The Earl and his agitated wife followed.

"What ails my Helen?" asked the affectionate father.

"I know not;" replied Lady Ruthven; "she sat behind me. I knew nothing of her disorder till she fell as you see."

Murray instantly supposed that she had discovered the unknown knight: and looking from countenance to countenance amongst the train, to see if he could discover the envied cause of such emotions; he read in no face an answering feeling with that of Helen's: and turning away from his unavailing scrutiny, on hearing her draw a deep sigh, his eyes fixed themselves on her as if they would have read her soul. Wallace, who in the pale form before him, saw not only the woman

whom he had preserved with a brother's care, but the compassionate saint who had given a hallowed grave to the remains of an angel pure as herself, hung over her with an anxiety so eloquent in every feature, that the Countess would willingly at that moment have stabbed her in every vein.

Lady Ruthven had sprinkled her niece with water; and as she began to recover, Wallace motioned his chieftains to withdraw. Her eyes opened slowly; but recollection returned with every re-awakened sense: she dimly perceived a press of people around her; and fearful of again encountering that face which declared the Bruce of her secret meditations, and the Wallace of her declared veneration, to be one; she buried her face in the bosom of her father. In that short point of time, images of past, present, and to come, rushed before her; and without confessing to herself why she thought it necessary to make the vow, her soul

seemed to swear on the sacred altar of a parent's heart, never more to think on either idea. Separate, it was sweet to muse on her own deliverer; it was delightful to dwell on the virtues of her father's preserver. But when she saw both characters blended in one, her feelings seemed sacrilege; and she wished even to bury her gratitude where no eye but Heaven's could see its depth and fervour.

Lady Mar, trembling at what might be the consequences of this scene, determined to hint to Wallace that Helen loved some unknown knight; and bending to her daughter, said in a low voice, yet loud enough for him to hear, "Retire, my dear; you will be better in your own room, whether pleasure or disappointment about the person you wished to discover in Sir William's train, have occasioned these emotions."

Helen blushed scarlet deep at this indelicate remark; and raising her head

with that modest dignity which only belongs to the purest mind, gently but firmly said, "I obey you, madam; and he whom I have seen, will be too generous not to pardon the effects of so unexpected a weight of gratitude." As she spoke, her turning eye met the fixed gaze of Wallace. His countenance became agitated; and dropping on his knee beside her; "Gracious lady," cried he, "mine is the weight of gratitude! but it is dear and precious to me; a debt that my life will not be able to repay. I was ignorant of it, when at our first meeting, I refrained from confessing to you and to the hermit an outlaw's name; but had I known it, no considerations could have prevented me from then pouring out my grateful soul to the last friend of her who was the friend of all. The spirit of an angel, like yourself, Lady Helen, must whisper to you, all her widowed husband's thanks." He pressed her hand

fervently between his, and rising, left the room.

Helen looked on him with an immoveable eye, in which the heroic vow of her soul spoke in every beam; but as he arose, even then she felt its frailty; for her spirit seemed leaving her; and as he disappeared from the door, her world seemed shut from her eyes. Not to think of him was impossible: how to think of him, was in her own power. Her heart felt as if suddenly made a desert. But heroism was there. She had looked upon the Heaven-dedicated Wallace; on the widowed mourner of Marion; the saint and the hero; the being of another world! and as such she would regard him; till in the realms of purity she might acknowledge the brother of her soul!

A sacred inspiration seemed to illuminate her features, and to brace with the vigour of immortality, those limbs which

before had sunk under her. She forgot she was still of earth, while a holy love, like that of the dove in Paradise, sat brooding on her heart.

Lady Mar gazed on her without understanding the ethereal meaning of those looks. Judging from her own impassioned feelings she could only resolve the resplendent beauty which shone from the now animated face and form of Helen, into the rapture of finding herself beloved. Had she not heard Wallace declare himself to be the unknown knight who had rescued Helen? she had heard him devote his life to her: and was not his heart included in that dedication? She had then heard that love vowed to another, which she would have sacrificed her soul to win!

Murray too was confounded; but his reflections were far different from those of Lady Mar. He saw his newly-discovered passion smothered in its first breath. At the moment in which he found that

he loved his cousin above all of woman's mould, an unappealable voice in his bosom bade him crush every fond desire. That heart, which, with the chaste transports of a sister had throbbed so entrancingly against his, was then another's! Was become the captive of Wallace's virtues; of the only man whom his judgment would have said, *deserves Helen Mar.* But when he clasped her glowing beauties in his arms the night before, his enraptured soul then believed, from the tender smile on her lips, that it was only the earnest of the moment when he might hold her there for ever! That dream was now past.—"Well! be it so!" said he to himself; "if this too daring passion must be clipt on the wing, I have at least the consolation that it soared like the bird of Jove!—But, loveliest of created beings;" thought he, looking on Helen with an expression which, had she met it, would have told her all that was passing in his soul; "if

I am not to be thy love; I will be thy friend—and live for thee and Wallace!"

Lady Mar, believing that she had read her sentence, in what she thought the triumphant glances of a happy passion, turned from her daughter-in-law with such a hatred mantling in her heart, that she durst not trust her eyes to the inspection of any of the by-standers. But her tongue could not be restrained longer than the moment in which the object of her jealousy left the room. As the door closed upon Helen, who retired, leaning on the arms of her aunt and Edwin, the Countess turned to her lord; his eyes were looking with doting fondness towards the point where she withdrew. This sight augmented the angry tumults in the breast of Lady Mar, and with a bitter smile, she said, (for she half-suspected what was passing in his mind;) "So, my lord, you find that the icy-bosomed Helen can be thawed!"

"How do you mean, Joanna?" re-

turned the Earl, doubting her words and looks; "you surely cannot blame our daughter for being sensible of gratitude."

"I blame all young women," replied she, "who give themselves airs of unnatural coldness; and then, when the proof comes, behave in a manner as indelicate as extraordinary."

"My Lady Mar!" ejaculated the Earl, with an amazed look; "what am I to think of you from this! How has my daughter behaved indelicately? She did not lay her head on Sir William Wallace's bosom and weep there, till he replaced her on her natural pillow, mine! Have a care, Lady Mar, that I do not see more in this spleen, than it would be honourable to you for me to discover."

The Countess fearing nothing so much as that her husband should really suspect the passion which possessed her; (for the very idea of being removed from the side of Wallace, which, under such circumstances would certainly be the case, re-

called her to all her former duplicity;) with a surprised and uncomprehending air, said—"I do not understand what you mean, Donald." And then turning to Lord Ruthven, who stood uneasily viewing this scene; "How," cried she, "can my lord discover spleen, in my maternal anxiety respecting the daughter of the man I love and honour above all the earth? But men, however sensible, do not properly estimate female reserve. Any woman would say with me, that to faint at the sight of Sir William Wallace was declaring an emotion not to be revealed before so large a company! a something, from which men might not draw the most agreeable inferences."

"It only declared surprise, madam;" cried Murray; "the surprise of a modest and ingenuous mind, that did not expect to recognise its mountain-friend in the person of the protector of Scotland."

Lady Mar put up her lip in contempt, and turning to the still silent Lord Ruth-

ven, again addressed him. "Step-mothers, my lord," said she, "have hard duties to perform; and when we think we fulfil them best, our husband comes with a magician's wand and turns all our good to evil."

"Array your good in a less equivocal garb, my dear Joanna;" answered the Earl of Mar, rather ashamed of the hasty words which the suspicion of a moment had drawn from his lips; "judge my child by her usual conduct, and not by an accidental appearance of inconsistency, and I shall ever be grateful for your solicitude. But in this instance, though she might betray the weakness of an enfeebled constitution, it was certainly not the frailty of a love-sick heart."

"Judge me by your own rule, dear Donald;" said she, blandishingly kissing his forehead; "and you will not again wither the mother of your boy with such a look as I just now received!"

Lord Ruthven, glad to see this recon-

ciliation, made a sign to Murray, and they withdrew together. Meanwhile, the honest Earl, surrendering his whole heart to the wiles of his wife, poured into her not inattentive ear all his wishes for Helen, all the hopes which her late meeting with Wallace, and their present recognition, had given birth.—"I had rather have that man my son;" said he; "than see my beloved daughter placed on an imperial throne."

"I do not doubt it;" thought Lady Mar; "for there are many emperors, but only one William Wallace!" However, her sentiments she confined to herself; neither assenting nor dissenting, but answering so as to secure the confidence by which she hoped to traverse his designs. According to the inconsistency of the wild passion that possessed her, one moment she saw nothing but despair before her; and in the next, it seemed impossible that Wallace should in heart be proof against her tenderness and charms.

She remembered Murray's words, that he was sent to set *her* free! and that recollection re-awakened every hope. Sir William had placed Lord Mar in a post as dangerous as honourable. Should the Southrons return in any force into Scotland, Stirling would be one of the first places they would attack. The Earl was brave, but age had robbed him of much of his martial vigour: might she not then be *indeed set free?* And might not Wallace on such an event, mean to repay her for all those sighs he now sought to repress from ideas of virtue, which she could admire, but had not courage to imitate? Might she not in the end be Wallace's wife?

These wicked meditations passed even at the side of her husband: and with a view to further every wish of her intoxicated imagination, she determined to spare no exertion to secure the support of her own family; which, when agreeing in one point, was the most powerful of any in

the kingdom. Her father, the Earl of Strathearn, was now a misanthropic recluse in the Orkneys; she, therefore, did not calculate on his assistance: but, she resolved on requesting Wallace to put the names of her cousins Athol and Badenoch into the exchange of prisoners; for by their means she expected to accomplish all she hoped. On Mar's probable speedy death, she had so long thought, that she now regarded it as a certainty; and so pressed forward to the fulfilment of her love and ambition, with as much eagerness as if he were already in his grave.

She recollected that Wallace had not this time thrown her from his bosom, when, in the transports of her joy, she had, even unrestrained by the crowd around, cast herself upon it: he only gently whispered, "Beware, lady! there are present, who may think my services, by this, too richly paid. With these words he had relinquished her to her husband. But in them she saw nothing

inimical to her wishes; it was a caution, not a reproof: and had not his warmer address to Helen, conjured up all the fiends of jealousy, she would have been perfectly satisfied with these grounds of hope.

Eager, therefore, to break away from Lord Mar's projects relating to his daughter, at the first decent opportunity, she said—"We will consider more of this, Donald. I now resign you to the duties of your office, and shall pay mine to our dear Helen."

Lord Mar pressed her hand to his lips, and they parted.

CHAP. IV.

THE fame of these victories, the seizure of Stirling, the conquest of above 60,000

men, and the Lord Warden with his late deputy taken prisoners; all spread through the country on the wings of the wind.

Messengers were dispatched by Wallace, not only to the nobles who had already declared for the cause by sending him their armed followers; but to the clans who yet stood irresolute. But to the chieftains who had taken the side of Edward, he sent no exhortation. And when he was advised to do so, by Lord Ruthven, his answer was " No, my lord; we must not spread a snare under our feet. If these men could be affected by the interest of their country; as they have the power to befriend her, they would not now colleague with her enemies. They remember her happiness under the rule of our Alexanders; they see her sufferings beneath the sway of an usurper: and if they can know these things, and require arguments to bring them to their duty; should they then come to it, it would not be to fulfil, but to betray. Ours, my

dear Ruthven, is a commission from Heaven. The truth of our cause is God's own signet; and is so clear, that it need only be seen to be acknowledged. And shall we seek to persuade those who err against the evidence of their own senses, and their own true interests? By what arguments could we turn such perverted judgments? All honest minds will come to us of themselves: and those who are not so, had better be avoided, than shewn the way by which treachery may effect what open violence cannot accomplish."

This reasoning, drawn from the experience of nature; neither encumbered by the subtilties of policy, nor the sophistry of the schools; was evident to every understanding, and decided the question.

Lady Mar, unknown to any one, again applied to her fatal pen; but with other views than for the ruin of the cause, or the destruction of Wallace. It was to strengthen his hands with the power of

all her kinsmen; and finally, by the crown which they should place on his head, exalt her to the dignity of a queen. She wrote first to John Cummin, Earl of Buchan; enforcing a thousand reasons, why he should now leave a sinking cause, and join the rising fortunes of his country.

"You see," said she, "that the happy star of Edward is setting. The King of France, not only maintains possession of that monarch's territory of Guienne, but he holds him in check on the shores of Flanders. Baffled abroad, an insurrection awaits him at home; the priesthood, whom he has robbed, cover his name with anathemas; the nobles whom he has insulted, trample on his prerogative; and the people, whose privileges he has invaded, call aloud for redress. The proud barons of England are ready to revolt. And the lords Hereford and Norfolk, (those two earls whom, after madly threatening to hang,(c) he sought to bribe to

their allegiance by leaving them in the full powers of constable and mareschal of England;) are conducting themselves with such domineering consequence, that even the Prince of Wales submits to their directions, and the throne of the absent tyrant is shaken to its centre.

" Sir William Wallace has rescued Scotland from his yoke. The country now calls for her ancient lords; those who made her kings, and supported them. Come then, my cousin! espouse the cause of right; the cause that is in power; the cause that may aggrandize the house of Cummin, with still higher dignities than any with which it has hitherto been honoured."

With these arguments; and with others more adapted to his Belial mind, she tried to bring him to her purpose; to awaken what ambition he possessed; and to entice his baser passions, by offering security in a rescued country, to the unmolested indulgence of senses to which

he had already sacrificed the best properties of man. She dispatched her letter by a messenger whom she bribed to secrecy; and added in her postscript, that "the answer she should hope to receive, would be an offer of his services to Sir William Wallace."

While the Countess of Mar was devising her plans, (for the gaining of Lord Buchan was only a preliminary measure;) the dispatches of Wallace had taken effect. Their simple details, and the voice of fame, had roused a general spirit throughout the land; and in the course of a very few days after the different messengers had left Stirling, the plain around the city was covered with a mixed multitude: all Scotland seemed pressing to throw itself at the feet of its preserver. A large body of men, brought from Mar, by Murray, according to his uncle's orders, were amongst the first encamped on the Carse. And that part of Wallace's own particular band, which he had left at

Dumbarton to recover of their wounds, now, under the command of Stephen Ireland, rejoined their lord at Stirling.

Neil Campbell, the brave Lord of Lochawe, and Lord Bothwell, the father of Lord Andrew Murray, with a strong reinforcement, arrived from Argyleshire. The chiefs of Ross, Dundas, Gordon, Lockhart, Scott, Erskine, Lindsay, Cochran, and of almost every noble family in Scotland, sent their sons at the head of detachments from their clans, to swell the victorious ranks of Sir William Wallace.

When this patriotic host assembled on the Carse of Stirling, every inmate of the city, who had not duty to confine him within the walls, turned out to view the glorious sight. Mounted on a rising ground, they saw each little army; and the emblazoned banners of all the chivalry of Scotland floating afar over the lengthened ranks.

At this moment, the lines which guarded

the outworks of Stirling opened from right to left, and discovered Wallace advancing on a white charger: when the conqueror of Edward's hosts appeared; the deliverer of Scotland; a mighty shout from the thousands around rent the skies, and shook the earth on which they stood.

Wallace raised his helmet from his brow; as by an instinctive motion every hand bent the sword and banner it contained.

"He comes in the strength of David!" cried the venerable bishop of Dunkeld, who appeared at the head of his church's tenantry; "Scots, behold the Lord's anointed!"

The exclamation, which burst like inspiration from the lips of the bishop, struck to every heart. "Long live King William!" was echoed with transport by every follower on the ground; and while the reverberating heavens seemed to ratify the voice of the people, the lords them-

selves, (now believing, that he who won, had the best right to enjoy,) joined in the glorious cry; and galloping up from the front of their ranks, threw themselves from their steeds; and before Wallace could recover from the surprise into which this unexpected salutation had thrown him, Lord Bothwell and Lord Loch-awe, followed by the rest, had bent their knees and acknowledged him to be their sovereign. The bishop of Dunkeld at the same moment drawing from his breast a silver dove of sacred oil, poured it upon the unbonnetted head of Wallace:—"Thus, O King!" cried he, "do I consecrate on earth, what has already received the unction of Heaven!"

Wallace, at this action, was awe-struck, and raising his eyes to that heaven; his soul, in silence, breathed its unutterable devotion. Then looking on the bishop: "Holy father;" said he; "this unction may have prepared my brows for a crown; but, it is not of this world. Rise,

lords!" and as he spoke he flung himself off his horse, and taking Lord Bothwell by the hand, as the eldest of the band; "Kneel not to me," cried he, "I am to you, what Gideon ([f]) was to the Israelites, your fellow-soldier. I cannot assume the sceptre you would bestow; for he who rules us all, has yet preserved to you a lawful monarch:—Bruce lives. And were he extinct, the blood royal flows in too many noble veins in Scotland for me to usurp its rights."

"The rights of the crown, lie with the only man in Scotland who knows how to defend them! else reason is blind, or the people abandon their own prerogative! What we have this moment vowed, is not to be forsworn. Baliol has abdicated our throne; the Bruce desert it; all our nobles slept till you awoke: and shall we bow to men who may follow, but will not lead?—No, bravest Wallace; from the moment you drew the first sword

for Scotland, you made yourself her lawful king!"

Wallace turned to the veteran Lord of Loch-awe; who uttered this with a blunt determination, that meant to say, that the election which had passed should not be recalled. "I made myself her champion, to fight for her freedom, not my own aggrandizement. Were I to accept the honour with which this too grateful nation would repay my service, I should not bring it that peace for which I contend. Struggling for liberty, the toils of my brave countrymen would be redoubled; for they would have to maintain the rights of an unallied king, against a host of enemies. The simple circumstance of a man from the private stations of life, being elevated to such dignity, would be felt as an insult by every royal house; and foes and friends would arm against us. On these grounds of policy, were I not loyal to the vows of my an-

cestors, I should repel the mischief you would bring upon yourselves by making me your King: as it is, my conscience, as well as my judgment, compels me to reject it. As your general, I may serve you gloriously:—as your monarch, that title alone would incur, perhaps, your ultimate destruction."

"From whom? noblest of Scots!" asked the Lord of Bothwell.

"From yourselves, my friends," answered Wallace, with a gentle smile. "Could I take advantage of the generous enthusiasm of a grateful nation; could I forget the duty I owe to the blood of our Alexanders, and leap into the throne; there are many who would soon revolt against their own election. You cannot be ignorant that there are natures who would endure no rule, did it not come by the right of inheritance; a right, by which they hold their own pre-eminence; and therefore will not dispute, lest they teach

their inferiors the same refractory lesson. But to bend with voluntary subjection; to obey a power, raised by themselves; would be a sacrifice abhorrent to their pride. After having displayed their efficiency in making a king, they would prove their independence, by striving to pull him down the moment he made them feel his sceptre.

"Such would be the fate of this election. Jealousies and rebellions would mark my reign; till even my closest adherents, seeing the miseries of civil war, would fall from my side, and leave the country again open to the inroads of her enemies.

"These, my friends and countrymen, would be my reasons for rejecting the crown, did my ambition point that way. But as I have no joy in titles; no pleasure in any power that does not spring hourly from the heart; let my reign be in your bosoms; and with the appellation of your

fellow-soldier, your friend! I will fight for you, I will conquer for you,—I will live or die!"

"This man," whispered Lord Buchan, who, having arrived in the rear of the troops, on the appearance of Wallace advanced within hearing of what he said: "This man, takes more pains to repulse a crown, than many are capable of exerting to obtain one."

"Ay, but let us see," returned the Earl of March, who accompanied him; "whether it be not Cesar's coyness: he thrice refused the purple, and yet he died Emperor of the Romans!"

"He that offers me a crown," returned Buchan, "shall never catch me playing the coquet with its charms. I warrant you I would embrace the lovely mischief, in the first presentation." A shout rent the air.—"What is that?" cried he, interrupting himself.

"He has followed your advice;" answered March, with a satirical smile—

"It is the preliminary trumpet, to long live King William the Great!"

Lord Buchan spurred forward to Scrymgeour, whom he knew, and inquired *where the new king was to be crowned?* "We have not yet to thank him for the possession of Scone!"

"True;" cried Sir Alexander, comprehending this remark; "but did Sir William Wallace accept the prayers of Scotland, neither Scone, nor any other spot in the kingdom, should refuse the place of his coronation."

"Not accept them!" replied Buchan; "then why that shout? Do the changelings rejoice in being refused?"

"When we cannot gain the altitude of our desires," returned the knight, "it is yet subject for thankfulness that we reach a step towards it. Sir William Wallace has consented to be considered as the Protector of the kingdom; to hold it for the rightful sovereign, under the name of Regent."

"Ay!" cried March, "he has only taken a mistress instead of a wife:—and trust me, when once he has got her into his arms, it will not be all the grey-beards in Scotland that can wrest her thence again. I marvel to see how men can be cajoled, and call the deception virtue!"

Scrymgeour had not waited for this reply of the insolent earl; and Buchan answering him; "I care not;" cried he; "whoever keeps my castle over my head, and my cellars full, is welcome to reign over John of Buchan. So onward, my gallant Cospatrick, to make our bow to royalty in masquerade!"

When these scorners approached, they found Wallace standing, uncovered, in the midst of his happy nobles. There was not a man present, to whom he had not given proofs of his divine commission: each individual was snatched from a state of oppression and disgrace, and placed in security and honour. With overflowing gratitude, they all thronged around him:

and the young, the isolated Wallace, found a nation waiting on his nod, the hearts of half a million of people offered to his hand, to turn and wind them as he pleased. No crown sat on his brows: but the bright halo of true glory beamed from his god-like countenance, and checked the arrogant smiles with which the haughty March, and the voluptuous Buchan came forward to mock him with their homage.

As the near relations of Lady Mar, he received them with courtesy; but one glance of his eye penetrated to the hollowness of both. And then remounting his steed, the stirrups of which were held by Edwin and Ker, he touched the head of the former with his hand; "Follow me, my friend; I now go to pay my duty to your mother. For you, my lords," said he, turning to the nobles around; "I shall hope to meet you at noon in the citadel, where we shall consult together on future movements. Nothing with us can

be considered as won, till all is gained."

The chieftains, with bows, acquiesced in his mandate; and fell back towards their troops. But the foremost ranks of those brave fellows, having heard much of what had past, were so inflamed with admiration of their Regent, that they rushed forward; and collecting in crowds around his horse, and in his path, some pressed to kiss his hand, and others his garments; while the rest ran in his way, shouting and calling down blessings upon him, till he stopped at the gate of Snawdoun.

CHAP. V.

OWING to the multiplicity of affairs which engaged Wallace's attention after

the capture of Stirling, the ladies of Mar had not seen him since his first visit to the citadel. The Countess passed this time in writing her dispatches to the numerous lords of her house, both in Scotland and in England: and by her subtile arguments, she completely persuaded her husband, of the cogency of putting the names of Lord Athol, and Lord Badenoch, into the list of noble prisoners he should request.

Wallace, when this was proposed to him, being alone with Lord Mar, and recollecting the behaviour of Athol at Montrose, made some objections against inviting him back into the country. But the Earl, who was prepared by his wife to overcome every obstacle in the way of her kinsman's return, answered, "That he believed, from the representations he had received of the private opinions both of Badenoch and Athol, that their treason was more against Baliol, than the kingdom; and that he irretrievably removed,

he understood they would be glad to take a part in its recovery."

"That may be the case with the Earl of Badenoch;" replied Wallace; "but something less friendly to Scotland, must be in the breast of the man who could betray Lord Douglas into the hands of his enemies."

"So I should have thought," replied the Earl, "had not the earnestness with which my wife pleads his cause, convinced me that she knows more of his mind than she chuses even to intrust me with; and, therefore, I must suppose that his conduct to Douglas arose from personal pique."

Though these explanations did not at all raise the absent lords in his esteem, yet, to appear hostile to the return of Lady Mar's relations, was a violence to her, which, in proportion as Wallace shrunk from the guilty affection she was eager to lavish upon him, he was averse to committing. He wished, by shewing her

every proper respect, to lead her to apprehend the turpitude of her conduct. By supposing that his abhorrence of her advances, had its origin in principle, rather than from personal repugnance to herself, she might see the foulness of her crime, and be recalled to a sense of virtue. He was therefore not displeased to have this opportunity of obliging her; and as he concluded, that amongst so many warm friends, a few cool ones could not do much injury, he gave in the names of Badenoch and Athol, with those of Lord Douglas, the Earl of Ross, Sir William Maitland (the only son of the venerable knight of Thirlestane,) Sir John Monteith, and of many other brave Scots.

For these, the earls De Warenne, De Valence, and Montgomery, Baron Hilton, and others of note were to be exchanged. Those of lesser consequence, man for man, were to be returned for Scots of the same degree.

The morning after the victory, when

the list of prisoners was put into Wallace's hand, Edwin, who stood by him, pointed to the name of Montgomery; "That," said he, "is the name of a person you already esteem: but how will you regard him, when I tell you who he was?"

Wallace turned on him an inquiring look.

"You have often spoken to me of Sir Gilbert Hambledon."

"And this is he!"—interrupted Wallace in a mournful voice.

Edwin now recounted the manner of the earl discovering himself, and how he came to bear that title. Wallace listened in silence, and as his young friend ended, sighed heavily.—"I will thank him," was all he said, and rising, he proceeded to the chamber of Montgomery. Even at that early hour it was filled with officers, come to inquire after their commander's health. Wallace advanced to the couch, and the Southrons drew back.

The expression in his countenance told the earl that he now knew him.

"Noblest of Englishmen!" cried Wallace, in a low voice, "I come to express a gratitude to you, as lasting as the memory of the action which gave it birth. Your generous conduct to all that was dearest to me on earth, was that night, in the garden of Ellerslie, witnessed by myself. I was in the tree above your head; and nothing but a conviction that I should embarrass the honour of my wife's protector, could at that moment have prevented my springing from my covert, and declaring my gratitude on the spot.

"Receive my thanks now, inadequate as they are to express all I feel. But you offered me your heart on the field of Cambus-Kenneth: I will take that as a generous intimation, how I may best acknowledge my debt. Receive, then, my never-dying friendship, the eternal gratitude of my immortal spirit!"

The answer of Montgomery, by presenting the tender form of his wife, and her dèvoted love, almost visibly before him, nearly forced open the fountain of tears which he had buried deep in his heart, and rising suddenly, for fear his emotions might betray themselves, he warmly pressed the hand of his English friend, and for a few minutes left the room.

When he returned, De Warenne and De Valence were there; and he immediately entered on subjects which they laid before him, respecting the time of their removal to England, and the general exchange of prisoners.

In the course of the same day, the Southron nobles were transported into the citadel; and the family of Mar removed from that fortress, to take up their residence in the palace of Snawdoun.

In arranging preliminaries to effect the speedy return of the Scots from England, (who must be known to have arrived on

the borders, before the English would be permitted to re-cross them;) in writing dispatches on this subject, and on others; had passed the time between the surrender of Stirling, and the hour when Wallace was called to the plain, to receive the offered homage of his grateful country.

Lady Mar, impatient to behold again the object of her fond machinations, hastened to the window of her apartment when the shouts in the streets informed her of the approach of Wallace. The loud huzzas, accompanied by the acclamations of *Our Protector and Prince!* seemed already to bind her brows with her anticipated diadem; and for a moment, vanity lost the image of love, in the purple with which she would have envelopped it.

Her ambitious vision was disturbed by the crowd rushing forward: the gates were thronged with people of every age and sex; and Wallace himself appeared on his white charger, with his helmet off,

bowing and smiling upon the populace. There was a mild effulgence in his eye; a divine benevolence in his countenance, as his parted lips shewed the brightness of his smile; which seemed to speak of happiness within, of joy to all around. She hastily snatched a chaplet of flowers from her head, and threw it from the window: Wallace looked up; his bow and his smile were then directed to her; but they were altered. The moment he met the gratulation of her eager eyes, he remembered what would have been the soft welcome of his Marion's under the like circumstance! But that tender eye was closed; that ear was shut; to whom he would have wished these plaudits to have given rapture, and they were now as nothing to him. The Countess saw not what was passing in his mind, but kissing her hand to him, disappeared from the window, and he entered the palace.

Another eye besides that of the Countess, had witnessed the triumphant entry

of Wallace. Triumphant in the true sense of the word; for he came a victor over the hearts of men; he came, not attended by his captives won in the war, but by the people he had blessed; by throngs calling him preserver, father, friend, and prince! By every title which can inspire the soul of man with the happy consciousness of fulfilling his embassy here below.

Helen was this witness. She had passed the long interval since she had seen Wallace in the state of one in a dream. The glance had been so transient, that every succeeding hour seemed to lessen the evidence of her senses that she had really beheld him. It appeared impossible to her that the man whom her thoughts had ever dwelt on as the widowed husband of Marion, as the hero whom sorrow had wholly dedicated to patriotism and to Heaven, should ever awaken in her breast feelings which would seem to break like a sacrilegious host

upon the holy consecration of his. Once she had contemplated his idea with the pensive impressions of one leaning over the grave of a hero:—she would then turn, as if emerging from the glooms of sepulchral monuments to upper day, to the image of her unknown knight; she would recollect the matchless graces of his figure; the noble soul that breathed from his every word, and action; and the sweet, though thoughtful serenity that sat on his brow. "There," whispered she to herself, "are the lofty meditations of a royal mind, devising the freedom of his people—when that is effected, how will the perfect sunshine break out from that face. Ah! how blest will Scotland be under his reign, when all will be light, virtue, and joy." Bliss hovered like an angel over the image of Bruce; and sorrow, in mourning weeds, seemed ever dropping tears, when any circumstance recalled that of Wallace.

Thus was the state of Helen's thoughts

when in the moment of her beholding the chief of Ellerslie in the citadel; she recognised in his expected melancholy form, the resplendent countenance of him whom she supposed the prince of Scotland.—That two images so opposite, should at once unite; that in one bosom, should be mingled all the virtues which she had believed were peculiar to each, struck her with overwhelming amazement.—But when she recovered from her short swoon, and found Wallace at her feet; when she felt, that all the devotion her heart had hitherto paid to the simple idea of virtue alone, would now be attracted to that glorious mortal in whom all human excellence appeared summed up; she trembled under an emotion that seemed to rob her of herself, and place a new principle of being within her.

All was so extraordinary, so unlooked for, so bewildering, that from the moment she retired in such a paroxysm of highly wrought feelings from her first interview

in the gallery with Wallace; she was altogether like a person in a trance; and hardly answering her aunt when she led her up the stairs, she complained she was ill, and threw herself upon a couch.

At the very time that her heart told her, in a language she could not misunderstand, that she irrevocably loved this too glorious, too amiable Wallace; it as powerfully denounced to her, that she had devoted herself to one who would ever be to her as a being of air. No word of sympathy would ever whisper felicity to her heart; no—the flame that was within her, (which she found would be immortal as the vestal fires which resembled its purity,) must burn there unknown; hidden, but not smothered.

"Were this a god," cried she to herself, as she laid her throbbing head upon her pillow, "how gladly should I feel these emotions! For, could I not fall down and worship him? Could I not think it a world of bliss, to live for ever

within the influence of his virtues: looking at him, listening to him, rejoicing in his praises, happy in his happiness; though I should be invisible, and he not know that Helen Mar even existed! And I may live thus," said she; "I may steal some portion of the rare lot that was Lady Marion's—to die for such a man! Ah, could I be in Edwin's place, and wait upon his smiles! But that may not be: I am a woman, and formed to suffer in silence and seclusion. But even at a distance, brave Wallace, my spirit shall watch over you in the form of this Edwin; I will teach him a double care of the light of Scotland. And my prayers also, shall follow you; so that when we meet in heaven, the blessed Virgin shall say, with what hosts of angels her intercessions, through my vigils, have surrounded you!"

Thus did Helen commune with her own strangely affected heart; sometimes doubting the evidence of her eyes; then

convinced of their fidelity; and striving to allay the tumults in her mind. She seldom appeared from her own rooms; and such retirement was not questioned, her father being altogether engaged at the citadel; the Countess absorbed in her own speculations; and Lady Ruthven alone interrupting the solitude of her niece by frequent visits. Little suspecting the cause of Helen's prolonged indisposition, she generally selected Wallace for the subject of her conversation. She descanted with enthusiasm on the rare perfection of his character, told her all that Edwin had related of his actions from the taking of Dumbarton to the present moment; and then bade Helen remark the miracle of such wisdom, valour, and goodness, being found in one so young and handsome.

"Why, my dear," added she, "depend on it, before he was Lady Marion's husband, he must have heard sighs enough from the love-sick damsels about

him to have turned the brains of half the male world. There is something in his very look, did you meet him on a heath without better garb than a shepherd's plaid, sufficient to declare him the noblest of men; and would excuse the *gentlest* (f) lady in the land, for leaving hall and bower to share his sheep-cote. But alas!" and then the playful expression of her countenance altered; "he is now for none on earth!"

With these words she turned the subject to the confidential hours which he had passed with the adopted brother of his heart. Every fond emotion, seemed then centered in his wife and child. When Lady Ruthven repeated his pathetic words to Edwin, she wept: she even sobbed, and paused to recover; while the deep and silent tears which flowed from the heart to the eyes of Lady Helen, bathed the side of the couch on which she leaned.

"Alas!" cried Lady Ruthven, "that a

man so formed to grace every relation in life; so noble a creature in all respects; so fond a husband, so full of parental tenderness; that he should be deprived of the wife on whom he doted; that he should be cut off from all hope of posterity: that when he shall die, nothing will be left of William Wallace, breaks my heart!"

"Ah, my aunt," cried Helen, raising her head with animation, "will he not leave behind him the liberty of Scotland? That is an offspring, worthy of his god-like soul."

"True, my dear Helen: but had you ever been a parent, you would know, that no achievements, however great, can heal the wound made in a father's heart by the loss of a beloved child. And though Sir William Wallace never saw the infant ready to bless his arms, yet it perished in the bosom of its mother; and that circumstance must redouble his af-

fliction: horribly does it enhance the cruelty of the deed!"

"He has in all things been a direful sacrifice;" returned Helen: "and with God alone dwells the power to wipe the tears from his heart."

"They flow not from his eyes," answered her aunt; "but deep, deep is the grief that my Edwin says is settled there."

While Lady Ruthven was uttering these words, shouts in the streets made her pause; and soon recognising the name of Wallace sounding from the lips of the rejoicing multitude, she turned to Helen: "Here comes our deliverer!" said she, taking her by the hand; "we have not seen him since the first day of our liberty. It will do you good, as it will me, to look on his beneficent face!"

She obeyed the impulse of her aunt's arm, and reached the window just as he passed the court-yard. Helen's soul

seemed rushing from her eyes. "Ah! it is indeed he!" thought she; "no dream, no illusion, but his very self."

He looked up: but not on her side of the building; it was to the window of Lady Mar: and as he bowed, he smiled. All the charms of that smile struck upon the soul of Helen; and hastily retreating from the window, she sunk breathless into a seat.

"O, no! that man cannot be born for the isolated state I have just lamented. He is not to be for ever cut off from communicating that happiness to which he would give so much enchantment!" Lady Ruthven ejaculated this with fervour; her matron cheeks flushing with a sudden and more forcible admiration of the person and mien of Wallace. "There was something in that smile, Helen, which tells that all is not chilled in his heart. And indeed, how should it be otherwise? That generous interest in the happiness of all, which seems to flow in a

tide of universal love, cannot spring from a source incapable of dispensing the softer streams of it again. I will venture my life, Helen, that Sir William Wallace loses his heart before he is aware of it, to some lovely creature—yourself, perhaps—and is married before the expiration of the year!"

Helen, whose well poised soul was not affected by the agitations of her body, (agitations she was determined to conquer,) calmly answered; "Such an idea little agrees with all you have been telling me of his conversations with Edwin. Sir William Wallace will never love woman more. And even to name the expectation is an offence against the sacredness of his sorrow, that I cannot bear to hear."

"Blame me not, Helen," returned Lady Ruthven, "that I forgot probability, in grasping at the possibility, that fate would one day give me such a nephew as Sir William Wallace, and you a

husband worthy of your merits! I had always in my own mind, fixed on your unknown knight for your liege lord; and now, that I find he and the deliverer of Scotland are one, I am not to be looked grave at, for wishing to reward him with the most precious heart that ever beat in a female breast."

"No more of this, if you love me, my dear aunt!" returned Helen; "it neither can, nor ought to be. I revere the memory of Lady Marion too much, not to be agitated by the subject; so, no more!—" she was agitated. But at that instant Edwin throwing open the door, put an end to the conversation.

He came to apprize his mother that Sir William Wallace was in the state apartments; being come purposely to pay his respects to her; not having even been introduced to her, when the illness of Helen in the castle, had made them part so abruptly.

"I will not interrupt his introduction

now," said Helen. " I am indisposed: a few days' retirement may strengthen me, and then I shall see our protector as I ought."

" I will stay with you," cried Edwin, " and I dare say Sir William Wallace will have no objection to see my mother as soon as possible; for, as I came along I met my aunt Mar, hastening through the gallery: and between ourselves, my sweet coz, I do not think my noble friend quite likes a private conference with your fair step-mother.

Lady Ruthven had withdrawn before he made this observation.

" Why, Edwin; surely she would not do any thing ungracious to one, to whom she has acknowledged such a weight of obligations?" When Helen asked this, she remembered the spleen Lady Mar had once cherished against Wallace; and she feared that it might now have revived.

" Ungracious! O no! the reverse of

that: but her gratitude is full of absurdity.—I need not repeat the fooleries with which she sought to detain him at Bute.—Some new fancy respecting him, must now be disturbing her rest and his patience, for in my way hither I met her hastening along, and as she passed me, she exclaimed, '*Is Lord Buchan arrived?*' I answered, '*Yes.*' '*Ah, then he has made him king!*' cried she; and into the great gallery she darted."

"You do not mean to say," demanded Helen, turning her eyes with an expression, which seemed confident of his answer; "that Sir William Wallace has accepted the crown of Scotland?"

"Certainly not;" replied Edwin; "but as certainly it has been offered to him, and he has refused it."

"I could have sworn it!" returned Helen, rising from her chair; "all is loyal, all is great and consistent there, Edwin!"

"He is, indeed, the perfect exempla

of all nobleness," rejoined Edwin, "and I believe, I shall even love you better, my dear cousin, because you seem to have so clear an apprehension of his real character." He then proceeded, with all the animation of the most zealous affection, to narrate to Helen the particulars of the late scene on the Carse of Stirling: and while he deepened still more the profound impression the virtues of Wallace had made on her heart; he re-opened its more tender sympathies, by repeating, with even minuter accuracy than he had done to his mother, details of those hours of friendship which he had passed with him in retirement. He spoke of the beacon-hill: of moonlight walks in the camp, when all but the sentinels, and his general, and himself, were sunk in sleep.

These were the seasons when the suppressed feelings of Wallace would, by fits, break from his lips, and at last pour themselves out unrestrainedly to the ear of sympathy. As the young narrator

described all the endearing qualities of his friend; the cheerful heroism with which he quelled every tender remembrance, to do his duty in the day; "For it is only in the night," said Edwin, "that my general remembers Ellerslie." Helen's tears again stole silently down her cheeks: Edwin perceived them, and throwing his arms gently around her; "Weep not, my sweet cousin;" said he; "for with all his sorrow, I never saw true happiness, till I beheld it in the eyes, and heard it in the voice of Sir William Wallace. He has talked to me of the joy he should experience, in giving liberty to Scotland, and in establishing her peace, till (his enthusiastic soul, grasping hope as if it were possession,) he has looked on me with a consciousness of enjoyment, which seemed to say, that all bliss was summed up in a patriot's breast.

"And at other times, when after a conversation on his beloved Marion, a few natural regrets would pass his lips,

and my tears tell how deep was my sympathy; then, he would turn to comfort me.—Then he would shew me the world beyond this; that world which is the aim of all his deeds, the end of all his travails: and lost in the rapturous ideas of meeting his Marion there, a foretaste of all would seem to seize his soul: and were I then called upon to point out the most enviable felicity on earth, I should say, it is that of Sir William Wallace. It is this enthusiasm in all he believes and feels, that makes him what he is. It is this eternal spirit of hope, infused into him by Heaven itself, that makes him rise from sorrow like the sun from a cloud, brighter, and with more ardent beams. It is this that bathes his lips in the smiles of Paradise; that throws a divine lustre over his eyes; and makes all dream of love and happiness that look upon him."

Edwin paused:—"Is it not so, my cousin!"

Helen raised her thoughtful face.—"He is not a being of this earth, Edwin. We must learn to imitate him, as well as to——" She hesitated, and then added, "as well as to revere him. I do revere him: with such a sentiment as fills my heart when I bend before the altars of the saints. But not to worship;" said she, interrupting herself; "that would be a crime. To look on him as a glorious example of patient suffering, and of invincible courage in the behalf of truth and mercy! This is the end of my reverence of him. And this sentiment, my dear Edwin, you partake."

"It possesses me wholly;" cried the energetic youth; "I have no thought, no wish; nor ever move or speak, but with the intent to be like him. He calls me his brother! and I will be so in soul though I cannot in blood: and then, my dear Helen, you shall have two Sir William Wallaces to love!"

"Sweetest, sweetest boy!" cried Helen,

putting her quivering lips to his forehead; "you will then always remember, that Helen so dearly loves Scotland, as to be jealous, above all earthly things, for the Lord Regent's safety. Be his guardian angel. Beware of treason in man and woman, friend and kindred. It lurks, my cousin, under the most specious forms; and as one, mark Lord Buchan: in short, have a care of all whom any of the house of Cummin may introduce. Watch over your general's life in the private hour. It is not the public field, I fear for him; his valiant arm will there be his own guard! But in the unreserved day of confidence, envy will point its dagger; and then be as eyes to his too trusting soul; as a shield to his too confidently exposed breast!"

As she spoke, she strove to conceal her, perhaps, too eloquent face, in the silken ringlets of her hair.

"I will be all this;" cried Edwin, who saw nothing in her tender solici-

tude, but the ingenuous affection which glowed in his own heart; "and I will be your eyes too, my cousin; for when I am absent with Sir William Wallace, I shall consider myself as your representative; and so will send you regular dispatches of all that happens to him."

Thanks would have been a poor means of imparting what she felt at this assurance; and rising from her seat with some of Wallace's own resigned and enthusiastic expression in her face, she pressed Edwin's hand to her heart; and bowing her head to him in token of gratitude, withdrew into an inner apartment.

CHAP. VI.

THE Countess's chivalric tribute from the window, gave Wallace reason to anticipate her company in his visit to Lady Ruthven; and on finding the room vacant, he dispatched Edwin for his mother, that he might not be distressed by the unchecked advances of a woman, whom, as the wife of Lord Mar, he was obliged to see; and whose weakness he pitied, as she belonged to a sex, for which, in consideration of the felicity once bestowed on him by woman, he felt a peculiar tenderness. Respect the Countess he could not; nor indeed could he feel any gratitude for a preference, which seemed to him, to have no foundations in the only true basis of love,—the virtues of the object. For as she acted against

every moral law, against his declared sentiments, it was evident that she placed little value on his esteem; and therefore he despised, while he pitied, a human creature ungovernably yielding herself to the sway of her passions.

In the midst of thoughts so little to her advantage, Lady Mar entered the room. Wallace turned to meet her, while she, hastening towards him, and dropping on one knee, exclaimed; "Let me be the first woman in Scotland, to acknowledge its king!"

Wallace put forth his hand to raise her, and smiling, replied; "Lady Mar, you do me an honour I can never claim. I am not King of Scotland."

"How?" cried she, starting on her feet: "What then was that cry I heard? Did they not call you prince and sovereign? Did not my Lord Buchan ——" Confused, disappointed, overpowered, she left the unfinished sentence, sunk on a seat, and burst into tears. At that mo-

ment she saw her anticipated crown fall from her head; and having united the gaining of Wallace, with his acquisition of this dignity, all her hopes seemed again the sport of winds. She felt as if Wallace had eluded her power: for it was by the ambition-serving acts of her kinsman, that she had meant to bind him to her love; and now all was rejected, and she wept in despair. He gazed at her with amazement: what these emotions and his elevation had to do with each other, he could not guess; but recollecting her manner of mentioning Lord Buchan's name, he answered, "Lord Buchan I have just seen. He and Lord March came upon the Carse at the time I went thither to meet my gallant countrymen; and these two noblemen, though so lately the friends of Edward, united with the rest in proclaiming me Regent."

This word dried the tears of Lady Mar. She saw the shadow of royalty behind it; and summoning that artifice, so ready at

her command, to conceal the joy of her heart, she calmly said, "Blame not this weakness: but it is not that of vain wishes for your aggrandizement. You are the same to Joanna Mar, whether as a monarch or a private man; as long as you possess that supremacy in all excellence which first gained her esteem. It is for Scotland's sake alone that I wish you her king. You have taught me to forget all selfish desires; to respect myself;" cried she; "and from this hour, I conjure you to regard me as a sister! wipe from your memory all my folly—all my love—" With the last word her bosom heaved tumultuously, and she rose in agitation. Wallace now gazed on her with redoubled wonder. She saw it; and hearing a foot in the passage, she turned towards him, and grasping his hand, said in a soft and hurried tone, "Forgive, that what is entwined with my heart, should cost me some pangs to wrest thence again:—only respect me, and I am comforted!" Wallace

in silence pressed her hand, and the door opened.

Lady Ruthven entered. The Countess, whose present aim was to throw the virtue of Wallace off its guard, and to take that by sap, which she found resisted open attack, with a penitential air, disappeared by another passage. Edwin's gentle mother was followed by the same youth who had brought Helen's packet to Berwick. It was Walter Hay, anxious to be recognised by his benefactor, to whom his recovered health had rendered his person strange. Wallace received him with kindness; and told him, to bear his grateful respects to his lady, for her care of her charge. Lord Ruthven, with others, soon entered; and at the appointed hour they attended their chief to the citadel.

The council-hall was already filled with the lords who had brought their clans to the Scottish standard. On the entrance of Wallace, they rose: and Mar coming forward, followed by the heralds and

other officers of ceremony, saluted him with the due forms of Regent, and led him to the throne. Wallace ascended; but it was only to take thence a packet, which had been deposited for him on its cushion; and coming down again, he laid the parchment on the council-table; "I can do all things best," said he, "when I am upon a level with my friends." He then broke the seal of the packet. It was from the Prince of Wales: and agreed to Wallace's proposed exchange of prisoners; but, in severe language, denounced him as the instigator of rebellion; and bade him expect future judgment from his incensed King, for the mischief he had wrought in the realm of Scotland. The letter was finished by a demand, that the town and citadel of Berwick should be surrendered to England as a gage for the quiet of the borders till Edward should return.

Kirkpatrick, as he listened to this letter, expressed vehement displeasure at

the audacious threatenings of the young prince. "He should come amongst us, like a man;" cried Sir Roger; "and we would soon shew him who it is, by whom Scotland suffers: Ay, even on his back, we would write the chastisement due to the offender."

"Be not angry with him, my friend;" returned Wallace; "these threats are words of course from the son of Edward. Did he not fear both our rights, and our arms, he would not so readily accord with our propositions. You see, every Scottish prisoner is to be on the borders by a certain day, and, to satisfy that impatient valour, (which I never check, but when it loses itself in a furor too nearly resembling that of our enemies;) I intend to make your prowess once again the theme of their discourse. You shall retake your castles in Annandale."

"Give me but the means, to recover those stout gates of my country," cried Kirkpatrick, "and I will warrant you

to keep the keys in my own hands till doomsday! You shall see me gripe them, even in death."

Wallace resumed: "3000 men are at your command; soon as both hosts of prisoners pass each other on the Cheviots, the armistice will terminate. You may then fall back upon Annandale, and that night light your own fires in Torthorald. Send the expelled garrisons into Northumberland; and shew this haughty prince, that we know how to replenish his depopulated towns."

"But first I will set my mark on them!" cried Kirkpatrick, with one of those laughs which ever preluded some savage proposal.

"I can guess it would be no gentle one;" returned Wallace: "Why, brave knight, will you ever sully the fair field of your fame with an ensanguined tide?"

"It is the fashion of the times;" replied Kirkpatrick roughly: "you only, my victorious general, who perhaps had

most cause to go with the stream, have chosen a path of your own. But look around! see our burns, which the Southrons made run with Scottish blood; our hillocks, swoln with the cairns of our slain; the highways blocked up with the graves of the murdered; and our lands filled with maimed vassals, who purchased life of our ruthless tyrants, by the loss of eyes and of limbs, and shall we talk of gentle methods with the perpetrators of these horrors? Sir William Wallace, you would make women of us."

"Shame, shame! Kirkpatrick!" resounded from every voice, "you insult the Regent!"

Kirkpatrick stood, proudly frowning, with his left hand on the hilt of his sword. Wallace, by a motion, hushed the tumult, and spoke; "No chieftain of Scotland can offer me greater respect, than frankly to trust me with his sentiments."

"Though we disagree in some points," cried Kirkpatrick, "I am ready to die

for you at any time; for I believe, a truer Scot treads not the earth; but I repeat, why by this mincing mercy, seek to turn your soldiers into women?"

"I seek to make them men;" replied Wallace; "to be aware that they fight with fellow-creatures, with whom they may one day be friends; and not like the furious savages of old Scandinavia, drink the blood of eternal enmity. I would neither have my chieftains set examples of cruelty, nor degrade themselves by imitating the barbarities of our enemies. That Scotland bleeds at every pore, is true; but let peace be our aim, and we shall heal all her wounds."

"Then I am not to cut off the ears of the freebooters in Annandale?" cried Kirkpatrick with a good-humoured smile: "Have it as you will, my general; only, you must new christen me, to wash the war-stain from my hand. The rite of my infancy was performed as became a soldier's son: my fount was my father's

helmet; and the first pap I sucked, was from the point of his sword."[h]

"You have not shamed your nurse!" cried Murray.

"Nor will I," answered Kirkpatrick, "while the arm that slew Cressingham remains unwithered."

While he spoke, Ker entered to ask permission to introduce a messenger from Earl de Warenne. Wallace gave consent. It was Sir Hugh le de Spencer, a near kinsman of the Earl of Hereford the tumultuary constable of England. He was the envoy who had brought the Prince of Wales's dispatches to Stirling. Wallace was standing when he entered, and so were the chieftains, but at his appearance, they sat down. Wallace retained his position.

"I come," cried the Southron knight, "from the Lord Warden of Scotland, who, like my prince, too greatly condescends to do otherwise than command, where now he treats; I come to the leader

of this rebellion, William Wallace, to receive an answer to the terms granted by the clemency of my master, the son of your liege lord, to this misled kingdom."

"Sir Knight," replied Sir William Wallace, "when the Southron lords delegate a messenger to me who knows how to respect the representative of the nation to which he is sent, and the agents of his own country, I shall give them my reply. You may withdraw."

The Southron stood, resolute to remain where he was: "Do you know, proud Scot," cried he, "to whom you dare address this imperious language? I am the nephew of the lord high-constable of England."

"It is pity," cried Murray, looking coolly up from the table, "that he is not here, to take his kinsman into custody!"

Le de Spencer fiercely half drew his sword; "Sir, this insult—"

"Must be put up with," cried Wallace,

interrupting him, and motioning Edwin to lay his hand on the sword; "you have insulted the nation to which you were sent on a peaceful errand; and having thus invited the resentment of every chief here present, you cannot justly complain against their indignation. But, in consideration of your youth, and probable ignorance of what becomes the character of an embassador, I grant you the protection your behaviour has forfeited. Sir Alexander Scrymgeour," said he, turning to him, "you will guard Sir Hugh le de Spencer to the Earl de Warenne, and tell him, that I am ready to answer any proper messenger."

The young Southron, frowning, followed Scrymgeour from the hall; and Wallace turning to Murray, "My friend," said he, "it is not well to stimulate insolence by repartee. This young man's speech, though an insult to the nation, was directed to me; and by me only ought it to have been answered, and that

seriously. We should in all transactions, whether great or small, never give a needless irritation to our enemy. The haughty spirit of this man should have been quelled, not incensed; and had you proceeded one word farther, you would have given him an apparently just cause of complaint against you; and of that, my friend, I am most sensibly jealous. It is not policy, nor virtue, to be rigorous to the extent of justice."

"I know," returned Murray, blushing, "that my wits are too many for me, and are ever throwing me, like Phaeton's horses, into the midst of some fiery mischief. But pardon me now, and I promise you to rein them close, when next I see this prancing knight."

"Bravo, my Lord Andrew!" cried Kirkpatrick, in an affected whisper, "I am not always to be bird alone, under the whip our Regent; you have had a few stripes, and now look a little of my feather!"

"Like as a swan to a vulture, good Roger!" answered Murray.

"That my be, my dainty lord," returned Kirkpatrick; "but wisdom is too high for me, wit too contemptible; so, once for all, I glory in being known as the sturdy knight, who swears eternal enmity to all Scotland's foes!—And had I my will, that saucy cur should have been sent howling to his masters; instead of being dispatched in safety, to laugh at clemency he cannot understand."

Wallace attended not to this tilting of humour between the chieftains, but engaged himself in close discourse with the elder nobles at the higher end of the hall. In half an hour Scrymgeour returned, and with him Baron Hilton. He brought an apology from De Warenne, for the behaviour of his embassador; and added his persuasions to the demands of England, that the Regent would surrender Berwick, not only as a pledge for the Scots keeping the truce on the borders,

but as a proof of his confidence in Prince Edward.

Wallace answered, that he had no reason to shew extraordinary confidence in one, who manifested by such a requisition, that he had no faith in Scotland; and therefore, neither as a proof of confidence, nor as a gage of her word, should Scotland, a victorious power, surrender to the vanquished, the eastern door of her kingdom. Wallace declared himself ready to dismiss the English prisoners to the frontiers, and to maintain the armistice till they had reached the south side of the Cheviots; "But," added he, "my word must be my bond; for, by the honour of Scotland, I will give no other.

"Then," answered Baron Hilton, with an honest flush passing over his cheek, as if ashamed of what he had next to say, "I am constrained to lay before you the last instructions of the Prince of Wales to Earl de Warenne."

He took a royally sealed roll of vellum from his breast, and read aloud:

"Thus saith Edward Prince of Wales, to Earl de Warenne, Lord Warden of Scotland. If that arch-rebel William Wallace, who now assumeth to himself the rule of all our royal father's hereditary dominions north of the Cheviots, refuseth to give unto us the whole possession of the town and citadel of Berwick-upon-Tweed, as a pledge of his faith to keep the armistice on the borders from sea to sea; we command you to tell him that we shall detain, under the ward of our good lieutenant of the tower in London, the person of William the Lord Douglas, as a close captive, until our prisoners, now in Scotland, arrive safely at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This mark of supremacy over a rebellious people, we owe, as a pledge of their homage to our royal father; and as a tribute of our gratitude to him for having allowed us to treat at all with so undutiful a part of his dominions."

"Baron," cried Wallace, "it would be beneath the dignity of Scotland to re-

taliate this act with the like conduct. The exchange of prisoners shall yet be made, and the armistice held sacred on the borders. But, as I hold the door of war open in the interior of the country, before the Earl de Warenne leaves this citadel, (and it shall be on the day assigned;) please the Almighty Lord of Justice, the Southron usurpers of all our castles on the eastern-coast, to the Murray Frith, shall be our hostages for the safety of Lord Douglas!"

"And this is my answer, noble Wallace!"

"It is: and you see no more of me till that which I have said, is done."

Baron Hilton withdrew. And Wallace, turning to his peers, rapidly made dispositions for a sweeping march from frith to frith; and having sent those who were to accompany him, to prepare for departure next day at dawn, he retired with the lords Mar and Bothwell, to arrange affairs relative to the prisoners.

CHAP. VII.

THE sun, next morning, rose on Wallace and his brave legions as they traversed the once romantic glades of Strathmore: but now the scene was changed. The villages were abandoned, and the land lay around in uncultivated wastes. Sheep without a shepherd, fled wild from the approach of man; and wolves ran howling from the cloisters of depopulated monasteries. The army approached Dumblane; but it was without inhabitant; grass grew in the streets; and the birds which roosted in the deserted dwellings, flew scared from the windows, as the trumpet of Wallace sounded through the town.—Loud echoes repeated the summons from its hollow walls; but no other voice was heard, no human face appeared;

for the ravening hand of Cressingham had been there!—Wallace sighed as he looked around him. "Rather smile," cried Graham, "that Heaven hath given you the power to say to the tyrants who have done this, *Here shall your proud waves be staid!*"

They proceeded over many a hill and plain, and found that the same withering touch of desolation had burnt up and overwhelmed the country. Wallace saw that his troops were faint for want of food; but he promised that Ormsby should provide them a feast in Perth; and with re-awakened spirits they took the river Tay at its fords, and were soon before the walls of that well armed city. But it was governed by a coward. Ormsby fled to Dundee at the first sight of the Scottish army. His flight might have warranted the garrison to surrender without a blow; but a braver man being his lieutenant, sharp was the conflict before Wallace could compel that officer to

abandon the ramparts, and to sue for the mercy which he had at first rejected.

After the fall of Perth, the young Regent made a rapid progress through that part of the country; driving the Southron garrisons out of Scone; and all the embattled towns; expelling them from the castles of Kincairn, Elcho, Kinfaun, and Doune; and then proceeding to the marine fortresses, (those avenues by which the ships of England had poured their legions on the eastern coast) he compelled Dundee, Cowper, Glamis, Montrose, and Aberdeen, all to acknowledge the power of his arms. He seized most of the English ships in these ports; and manning them with Scots, soon cleared the seas of the vessels which had escaped, taking some, and putting others to flight: in one of the latter was the fugitive Ormsby.

This enterprise achieved, Wallace, with a host of prisoners, turned his steps towards the Forth. But ere he left the banks of the Tay, he detached 3000

men; and putting them under the command of Lord Ruthven, gave him a commission to range the country from the Carse of Gowrie, to remotest Sutherland; and in all that tract, reduce every town and castle which had admitted a Southron garrison. Wallace took leave of Lord Ruthven at Hunting tower; and that worthy nobleman, when he assumed, with the government of Perth, this extensive command, said, as he grasped the Regent's hand, "I say not, bravest of Scots. what is my gratitude for thus making me an arm of my country, but deeds will shew!"(i)

He then bade a father's adieu to his son, counselling him to regard Wallace as the light in his path; and embracing him, they parted.

A rapid march round by Fyfeshire, (through which victory followed their steps, and the hard fought battle of Black Ironside will record for ever,) brought the

conqueror and his troops within sight of the towers of Stirling. It was on the eve of the day, which he had promised Earl de Warenne should see the English prisoners depart for the borders. No doubt of his arriving at the appointed time was entertained by the Scots, or by the Southrons in the castle. The one knew the sacredness of his word; and the other, having felt his prowess, would not so far disparage their own, as to suppose that any could withstand him by whom they were beaten.

De Warenne, as he stood on the battlements of the keep, beheld from afar the long line of Scottish soldiers as they descended the Oichel hills. When he pointed it out to De Valence, that nobleman, (who, in proportion as he wished to check the arms of Wallace, had flattered himself that it might happen,) against the evidence of his eye-sight, contradicted the observation of the veteran earl.

"Your sight deceives you;" said he; "it is only the sunbeams playing on the cliffs."

"Then those cliffs are moving ones," cried De Warenne, which, I fear, have already ground our countrymen on the coast to powder! We shall find Wallace here before sunset, to shew us how he has resented the affront, which our ill-advised prince cast on his jealous honour."

"His honour," returned De Valence, "is like that of his countrymen's; an enemy alike, to his own happiness, and to that of others. Had it allowed him to accept the crown of Scotland, and to have fought Edward with the concentrating arm of a king; or would he now offer peace to our sovereign, granting his prerogative as Liege Lord of the country, all would go well; but as his honour prevents his using these means of ending the contest, destruction must be the end of his career."

"And what quarrel," demanded De Warenne, "can you, my Lord de Valence, have against this nice honour of Sir William Wallace, since you allow it secures the final success of our cause?"

"His honour and himself are hateful to me!" impatiently answered De Valence; "he crosses me in my wishes, public and private; and for the sake of my King and myself, I might almost be tempted—" He turned pale as he spoke, and met the penetrating glance of De Warenne. He paused.

"Tempted to what?" asked De Warenne.

"To a Brutus mode of ridding the state of an enemy."

"That might be noble in a Roman citizen," returned De Warenne, "which would be villanous in an English lord, treated as you have been by a generous victor, not the usurper of any country's liberties, but rather a Brutus in defence of his own. Which man of us all, from the

general to the meanest follower in our camps, has he injured?"

Lord Aymer frowned: "Did he not expose me, threaten me with an ignominious death, on the walls of Stirling?"

"But was it before he saw the Earl of Mar, with his hapless family, brought with halters on their necks, to be suspended from this very tower?—Ah! what a tale has the lovely Countess told me, of that direful scene!—What he then did, was to check the sanguinary Cressingham, from embrewing his hands in the blood of female and infant innocence?"

"I care not," cried De Valence, "what are, or are not the offences of this domineering Wallace, but I hate him; and my respect for his advocates, cannot but correspond with that feeling." As he spoke, that he might not be farther molested by the arguments of De Warenne, he abruptly turned away and left the battlements.

Pride would not allow the enraged earl to confess his private reasons for this vehement emnity against the Scottish chief. A conference which he had held the preceding evening with Lord Mar, was the cause of this augmented hatred; and from that moment, the haughty Southron vowed the destruction of Wallace, by open attack, or secret treachery. Ambition, and the base counterfeit of love; those two master passions in untempered minds; were the springs of this antipathy. The instant in which he knew that the young creature, whom, at a distance, he saw clinging around the Earl of Mar's neck in the streets of Stirling, was the same Lady Helen on whose account Lord Soulis had poured on him such undeserved invectives in Bothwell castle, curious to have a nearer view of one, whose transcendent beauty he had often heard celebrated by others, he ordered her to be immediately conveyed to his apartments in the citadel.

On their first interview he was more struck with her personal charms than he had ever been with any woman's; although he was the most noted for gallantry of all the lords in the English court. He could hardly understand the nature of his feelings while discoursing with her. To all others of her sex he had declared his enamoured wishes with as much ease as vivacity; but when he looked on Helen, the admiration her loveliness inspired was checked by an undiscribable awe. No word of passion ever escaped his lips; he sought to win her by a deportment consonant with her own dignity of manners; and obeyed all her wishes, excepting when they pointed to any communication with her parents. He feared the wary eyes of the Earl of Mar. But nothing of this reverence of Helen, was grounded on any principle within the heart of De Valence: his idea of virtue was so erroneous, that he believed, by putting on its semblance,

he might steal on the confidence of his victim, and induce her to forget all the world, nay Heaven itself, in his sophistry and blandishments. To facilitate this end, he, at first, designed to precipitate the condemnation of the Earl; that he might be rid of the sense of a father's existence holding in dread of his censure, the perhaps, otherwise yielding heart of his lovely mistress.

The unprincipled and impure can have no idea that virtue, or delicacy, are other than vestments of disguise, or ornament, to be thrown off at will; and therefore, to reason with such minds, is to talk to the winds; to tell a man who is born blind, to decide between two colours. De Valence expected that the moment he could gain an interest in the heart of Lady Helen, she would fall into his snare. But seeing the anguish of her fears for her father, the fervour with which, even on her knees, she implored his life; the wily lover comprehended that the death of so

endeared a parent, would paralyze every tender feeling in her breast; and that instead of a fond beauty, he should clasp a piece of living marble in his arms, cold, and insensible to every outward object. When aware of this, he adopted the plan of granting the Earl reprieves from day to day; and, in spite of the remonstrances of Cressingham, he intended, (after having worked upon the terrors of Helen,) to grant to her her father's life, on condition of her yielding herself to be his. He had even meditated, that the accomplishment of this device, and of all his wishes, should have taken place the very night in which Wallace's first appearance before Stirling had called its garrison to arms.

De Valence, impelled by vengeance against the man who had driven him from Dumbarton and from Ayr; and irritated at being delayed, in the moment when his passion was to seize its object; thought to end all by a *coup de main*,—and

rushing out of the gates was taken prisoner.

Now, that the whole of the English army were in the same captivity with himself; that he saw the lately proscribed Lord Mar, governor of Stirling; and that the Scottish cause, seemed triumphant on every side; he changed his former illicit views on Helen, and bethought him of making her his wife. Ambition, as well as love, impelled him to this resolution; for, he aspired to the dignity of Lord Warden of Scotland; and he foresaw, that the vast influence which his marriage with the daughter of Mar must give him in the country, would be a decisive argument with the King of England.

To this purpose, not doubting the Scottish Earl's acceptance of such a son-in-law, on the very day that Wallace marched out of the town, towards the coast, De Valence sent to request an hour's private audience of Lord Mar.

He could not then grant it, but at noon next day they met in the governor's apartments.

Being seated, the Southron, without much preface, opened his wishes to Lord Mar, and proffered his hand for the Lady Helen; "I will make her the proudest lady in Great Britain," continued he, "for she shall have a court in my Welsh province, little inferior to that of Edward's queen."

"Pomp would have no sway with my daughter;" replied the Earl; "it is the royal mind she values, not its pageantry. Whomsoever she prefers, the tribute will be paid to the merit of the object, not to his rank; and therefore, earl, should it be you, the greater will be your pledge of happiness. I shall repeat to her what you have said, and to-morrow deliver her answer."

De Valence, not deeming it possible that it should be otherwise than favourable, allowed his imagination to roam

over every anticipated delight. He exulted in the pride with which he would shew this perfection of northern beauty, to the fair of England: how would the simple graces of her seraphic form, which looked more like a being of air than of earth, put to shame the laboured beauties of the court! And then it was not only the artless charms of a wood-nymph, he would present to the wondering throng, but a being, whose majesty of soul, proclaimed a high descent and peerless virtues. How did he congratulate himself, in contemplating this unsullied temple of virgin innocence, that he had never, by even the vapour of one impassioned sigh, contaminated her pure ear; or broken the magic spell, which seemed fated to crown him with happiness unknown, with honour unaxampled. To be so blessed, so distinguished, so envied, was to him a dream of triumph, that wafted away all remembrance of his late defeat; and he

believed, in taking Helen from Scotland, he should bear away a richer prize than any he could leave behind.

Full of these anticipations he attended the governor of Stirling the next day, to hear his daughter's answer. But unwilling to give the Earl that advantage over him, which a knowledge of his views in the marriage might occasion, he affected a composure he did not feel; and with a lofty air entered the room, as if he were come rather to confer, than to beg a favour. This deportment did not lessen the satisfaction with which the brave Scot opened his mission.

"My lord, I have just seen my daughter. She duly appreciates the honour you would confer on her; she is grateful for all your courtesies to her whilst she was your prisoner; but beyond that sentiment, her heart, attached to her native land, cannot sympathize with your wishes."

De Valence started. He did not ex-

pect any thing in the shape of a denial: but supposing that perhaps a little of his own art was tried by the father to enhance the value of his daughter's yielding; he threw himself into a chair, and affecting chagrin at a disappointment, (which in his own mind he did not believe was seriously intended) exclaimed with vehemence, "Surely, Lord Mar, this is not meant as a refusal? I cannot receive it as such; for I know Lady Helen's gentleness; I know the sweet tenderness of her nature would plead for me, were she to see me at her feet, and hear me pour forth the most ardent passion that ever burnt in a human breast. Oh, my gracious lord, if it be her attachment to Scotland which alone militates against me, I will promise that her time shall be passed between the two countries. Her marriage with me, may facilitate that peace with England, which must be the wish of us all; and perhaps the Lord Wardenship, which De Warenne now holds, may

be transferred to me: I have reasons for expecting that it will be so; and then she, as a queen in Scotland, and you as her father, may claim every distinction from her fond husband, every indulgence for the Scots which your patriot heart can dictate. This would be a certain benefit to Scotland; while the *ignis fatuus* which you are now following, however brilliant may be its career during Edward's absence, must, on his return, be extinguished in disaster and infamy."

The silence of the Earl of Mar, who, willing to hear all that was in the mind of De Valence, had let him proceed uninterrupted, encouraged the Southron lord to say more than he had at first intended to reveal; but when he made a pause, and seemed to expect an answer, the Earl spoke:—

"I am fully sensible of the honour you would bestow upon my daughter and myself, by your alliance; but, as I have said before her heart is too devoted to Scot-

land, to marry any man whose birth does not make it his duty to prefer the liberty of her native land, even before his love for her; that hope, to see our country freed from a yoke unjustly laid upon her; that hope which you, not considering our rights, or weighing the power that lies in a just cause, denominate an *ignis fatuus*, is the only passion I believe that lives in the gentle bosom of my Helen; and therefore, noble earl, not even your offers can equal the measure of her wishes."

At this speech, De Valence bit his lip with real disappointment; and starting from his chair in unaffected disorder; "I am not to be deceived, Lord Mar," cried he; "I am not to be cajoled by the pretended patriotism of your daughter; I know the sex too well to be cheated with these excuses. The *ignis fatuus* that leads your daughter from my arms, is not the freedom of Scotland, but the handsome rebel who conquers in its name! He is

now fortune's minion; but he will fall, Lord Mar, and then what will be the fate of his mad adherents?"

"Earl de Valence," replied the veteran, "sixty winters have checked the tides of passion in my veins; but the indignation of my soul against any insult offered to my daughter's delicacy, or to the name of the Lord Regent of Scotland, is not less powerful in my breast. But you are my prisoner; and I pardon, what I could so easily avenge. I will even answer you, and say, that I do not know of any exclusive affection subsisting between my daughter and Sir William Wallace; but this I am assured of, that were it the case, she would be more ennobled in being the wife of so true a patriot, and so virtuous a man, than were she advanced to the bosom of an emperor. And for myself, were he to-morrow hurled by a mysterious Providence, from his present nobly-won elevation, I should glory in my son, were he such, and

would think him great on a scaffold as on a throne."

"It is well that is your opinon;" replied De Valence, stopping in his wrathful strides, and turning on Mar with vengeful irony; "cherish these heroics; for you will assuredly see him so exalted, before another month passes over his head. Then, where will be his triumphs over Edward's arms, and Pembroke's (*) heart?—Where your daughter's patriot husband; your glorious son?—Start not old man, for by all the powers of hell I swear, that some eyes which now look proudly on the Southron host shall close in blood!"

"If they do," replied Mar, shuddering at the demoniac fire that lightned from the countenance of De Valence, "it must be by the agency of devils; and their minister, vindictive earl, will meet the vengeance of the eternal arm!"

"These dreams," cried De Valence,

"cannot terrify me. You are neither a seer, nor I a fool, to be taken by such prophecies. But were you wise enough to embrace the advantage I offer, you might be a prophet of good, greater than he of Ercildown, to your nation, for all that you would promise, I would take care should be fulfilled. But you cast from you your peace and safety: my vengeance shall therefore take its course. I rely not on oracles of heaven nor hell, but what I devote shall be condemned. I have pronounced the doom of my enemies: and though you now see me a prisoner, tremble, haughty Scot, at the resentment which lies in this head and heart! This arm needs not the armies of Edward to pierce you in your boast!"

He left the room as he spoke: and Lord Mar, shaking his venerable head as he disappeared, said to himself—"Impotent rage of passion and of youth, I pity and forgive you!"

It was not, therefore, so extraordinary that De Valence; when he saw Wallace descending the Oichel hills, with the flying banners of new victories; should break into curses of his fortune, and swear inwardly the most determined revenge.

Fuel was added to this fire, at sunset, when the almost measureless defiles of prisoners, marshalled under the walls of Stirling, and taking the usual oath to Wallace, met his view.

"To-morrow we quit these dishonouring walls," cried he to himself; "but ere I leave them, if there be power in gold, or strength in my arm, he shall die!"

CHAP. VIII.

THE Regent's re-entrance into the citadel of Stirling being on the evening preceding the day which he had promised should see the English lords depart for their country, De Warenne, as a mark of respect to a man whom he could not but regard with increasing admiration, went to the barbacan-gate to bid him welcome.

Wallace appeared; and as the cavalcade of noble Southrons who had lately commanded beyond the Tay, followed him, he glanced his eye around, and said with a smile to De Warenne, "You see, Sir Earl, I keep my word!" and then he added, "you leave Stirling to-morrow; but these remain, till Lord Douglas opens their prison-doors."

"I cannot but asquiesce in the justice of your determination;" returned De Warenne: "and to comfort these gentlemen under their captivity, I can only tell them that if any thing can reconcile them to the loss of liberty, it will be being the prisoners of Sir William Wallace."

After having transferred his captives to the charge of Lord Mar, Wallace went alone to the chamber of Montgomery, to see whether the state of his wounds would allow him to march on the morrow.—While he was yet there, an invitation arrived from the Countess of Mar, requesting his presence at an entertainment which, by her husband's consent, she meant to give that night at Snawdoun, to the Southron lords, before their departure for England."

"I fear you dare not expend your strength on this party?" inquired Wallace, turning to Montgomery.

"Certainly not," returned he; "but

I shall see you amidst your noble friends at some future period. When the peace your arms will win, is established between the two nations, I shall then revisit Scotland, and openly declare my soul's friendship for Sir William Wallace."

"As these are your sentiments," replied Wallace, "I shall hope that you will unite your influence with that of the brave Earl of Gloucester, to persuade your King to stop this bloodshed; for it is no vain boast to declare, that he may bury Scotland beneath her slaughtered sons, but they never will again consent to acknowledge any right in an usurper."

"Sanguinary have been the instruments of my sovereign's rule in Scotland;" replied Montgomery; "but such cruelty is foreign from his gallant heart: and without offending that high-souled patriotism, which would make me revere its possessor, were he the lowliest man in your legions; allow me, noblest of Scots, to plead one word in vindication of him

to whom my allegiance is pledged! Had he come hither conducted by war alone, what would Edward have been worse than any other conqueror? But on the reverse, was not his right to the supremacy of Scotland, acknowledged by the princes who contended for the crown? and besides, did not all the great lords swear fealty to England, on the day he nominated their King?"

"Had you not been under these impressions, brave Montgomery, I believe I never should have seen you in arms against Scotland; but I will remove them by a simple answer. All the princes whom you speak of, excepting Bruce of Annandale, did assent to the newly-offered claim of Edward on Scotland; but who amongst them had any probable chance for the throne, but Bruce and Baliol? Such ready acquiescence was meant to create them one. Bruce, conscious of his inherent rights, rejected the iniquitous demand of Edward; Baliol ac-

corded with it, and was made a king. All who were base enough to worship the rising sun, and I may say, contemn the God of Truth, swore to the falsehood. Others remained gloomily silent; and the bravest of them retired to the Highlands, where they dwelt amongst their mountains, till the cries of Scotland called them again to fight her battles.

"Thus did Edward establish himself as the liege lord of this kingdom. And whether the oppressions which followed, were his or his agents' immediate acts, it matters not; for he made them his own by his after-conduct: when remonstrances were sent to London, he neither punished nor reprimanded the delinquents; but marched an armed force into our country to compel us to be trampled on! It was not an Alexander nor a Charlemagne, coming in his strength to subdue ancient enemies; or to aggrandize his name, by vanquishing nations far remote, with whom he could have no particular

affinity! Terrible as such ambition was, it is innocence to what Edward has done. He came, in the first instance, to Scotland as a friend: the nation committed its dearest interests to his virtue; they put their hands into his, and he bound them in shackles. Was this honour? Was this the right of conquest? The cheek of Alexander would have blushed deep as his Tyrian robe, and the face of Charlemagne turned pale as his lilies, at the bare suspicion of being capable of such a deed.

"No, Lord Montgomery, it is not our conqueror we are opposing; it is a traitor, who, under the mask of friendship, has attempted to usurp our rights, destroy our liberties, and make a desert of our once happy country. This is the true statement of the case: and though I wish not to make a subject outrage his sovereign, yet truth demands of you to say to Edward, that to withdraw his pretensions from this exhausted country, is

the restitution we may justly claim, is all that we wish. Let him leave us in peace, and we shall no longer make war upon him. But if he persist, which the embassadors from the Prince of Wales denounce, even as Samson drew the temple on himself to destroy his enemies, Scotland will discharge itself upon the valleys of England, and there compel them to share the fate in which we may be doomed to perish."

"I will think of this discourse," returned Montgomery, "when I am far distant; and rely on it, noble Wallace, that I will assert the privilege of my birth, and counsel my King as becomes an honest man."

"Highly would he estimate such counsel," cried Wallace, "had he virtue sufficient to know, that he who will not be unjust to his sovereign's enemies, must be of an honour that will bind him with double fidelity to his King.

Such proof, give your sovereign; and if he have one spark of that greatness of mind which you say he possesses, though he may not adopt your advice, he must respect the adviser."

As Wallace pressed the hand of his friend to leave him to repose, a messenger entered from Lord Mar, to request the Regent's presence in his closet. He found him with Lord de Warenne.

The latter presented him with another dispatch from the Prince of Wales. It was to say, that news had reached him of Wallace's design to attack the castles garrisoned by England on the eastern coast; and that should this information prove true, he, the prince, declared, that as a punishment for the increasing audacity of the Scots, he would put Lord Douglas into closer confinement; and while the Southron fleets should baffle all Wallace's attempts against the castles, the moment the exchange of prisoners was made on

the borders, an army from England should enter Scotland and ravage it with fire and sword.

When Wallace had heard this dispatch, he smiled and said; "The deed is done, my Lord de Warenne. Both the castles, and the fleets are taken; and what punishment must we now expect from this terrible threatener?"

"Little from him, or his headlong counsellors;" replied De Warenne; "but Thomas Earl of Lancaster, the King's nephew, is come from abroad with a numerous army. He is to conduct the Scottish prisoners to the borders; and then to fall upon Scotland with all his strength; unless you previously surrender, not only Berwick, but Stirling, and the whole of the district between the Forth and Tweed, into his hands."

"My Lord de Warenne," replied Wallace, "you can expect but one return to these absurd demands. I shall accom-

pany you myself to the Scottish borders, and there make my reply."

De Warenne, who did indeed look for this answer, replied; "I anticipated that such would be your determination. And I have to regret, that the wild counsels which surround the young prince, precipitate him into conduct which must draw much blood on both sides, before his royal father's presence can regain what he has lost."

"Ah, my lord," replied Wallace, "is it to be nothing but war, war? Have you now a strong-hold of any force in all the Highlands? Is not the greater part of the lowlands free? And before this day month, not a rood of land shall your monarch possess in Scotland. We conquer, but it is for our own. Why then this unreceding determination to invade us? Not a blade of grass would I disturb, on the other side of Cheviot, if we might have peace. Let Edward yield us that,

and though he has pierced us with many a wound, we will yet forgive him."

De Warenne shook his head: "I know my King too well to expect pacific measures. He may die with the sword in his hand, but he will never grant an hour's repose to this country, till it submits to his sceptre."

"Then," replied Wallace, "the sword must be the portion of him and his. Ruthless tyrant! If the blood of Abel called for vengeance on his murderer, what must be the phials of wrath which are reserved for thee!"

A flush overspread the face of De Warenne at this apostrophe, and forcing a smile, "This strict notion of right," said he, "is very well in declamation; but how would it crop the wings of conquerors, and shorten the warrior's arm, did they measure by this rule!"

"How would it indeed!" replied Wallace; "and that they should, is most devoutly to be wished. All warfare that

is not defensive, is criminal: and he who draws his sword to oppress, or merely to aggrandize, is a murderer and a robber. This is the plain truth Lord de Warenne."

"I have never considered it in that light;" returned the earl; "nor shall I turn philosopher now. I revere your principle, Sir William Wallace; but it is too sublime to be mine. Nay, nor would it be politic for one who holds his possessions in England by the right of conquest, to question the virtue of the deed. By the sword, my ancestors gained their estates; and with the sword, I have no objection to extend my territories."

Wallace now saw that De Warenne, though a man of honour, was not one of virtue. Though his amiable nature made him gracious in the midst of hostility; and his good dispositions, would not allow him to act disgracefully in any concern, either of public or of private life, yet duty to God seemed a poet's flight to him. Educated in the forms of

religion, without knowing its spirit, he despised them; and believed the Deity too wise to be affected by the mummeries of the Romish ritual: ignorant of the sublime benevolence, which disdains not to provide food even for the *sparrow ere it falls,* he thought the Creator of all, too great to care about the actions of men: hence, being without the principles of good, virtue as virtue was nonsense to him.

Wallace did not answer his remark, and the conference was soon closed.

CHAP. IX.

EARL de Valence, though burning with stifled passions, accepted the invitation of Lady Mar. He hoped to see Helen,

to gain her ear for a few minutes; and above all, to find some opportunity, during the entertainment, of taking his meditated revenge on Wallace. The dagger seemed the surest way; and could he render the blow effectual, he should not only destroy the rival of his wishes, but by ridding his monarch of a powerful foe, deserve every honour at the royal hands. Love and ambition again swelled his breast; and with recovered spirits, and a glow on his countenance, which re-awakened hope had planted there, he accompanied De Warenne to the palace.

The hall was arrayed with feudal grandeur, for the feast. The seats at the table, which was spread for the knights of both countries, were covered with highly-wrought stuffs; and the emblazoned banners and other armorial trophies of the nobles, being hung aloft, according to the degree of the owner, each knight saw his precedence and where to take his place. The most costly meats, with the

royally attired peacock, served up in silver and gold dishes, and wine of the rarest quality, sparkled on the board. During the repast, two choice minstrels were seated in the gallery above, to sing the friendship of King Alfred of England, with Gregory the Great of Caledonia. The squires, and other military attendants of the nobles present, were placed at tables in the lower part of the hall, and served with dainty food, and courteous hospitality.

De Valence, on entering the hall, (for resentful in his disappointment, he had hitherto refused to accompany De Warenne in his visits to Snawdoun) was surprised to see such regal taste in the woman who had so lately been his prisoner at Dumbarton; and whom, because she resembled an English lady who had once behaved to him with scorn, he had treated with the most rigorous contempt. Lady Mar, forgetting De Valence's indignities, in her present power, came

forward to receive her illustrious guests. Her dress corresponded with the magnificence of the banquet; a robe of cloth of Baudkins enriched, while it displayed the beauties of her person; her wimple blazed with jewels; and a superb carkanet emitted its various rays from her bosom.(1)

De Warenne followed her with his eyes, as she moved from him. With an unconscious sigh he whispered De Valence, "What a land is this, where all the women are fair and the men brave!" "I wish that it, and all its men and women were in perdition!" returned De Valence in a surly tone. Lady Ruthven, entering with a group of lovely young women, the daughters of the neighbouring chieftains, checked the further expression of his spleen; and he now sought amongst them, but sought in vain, for Helen.

The chieftains of the Scottish army, with the lords Buchan and March, were

assembled around the Countess at the moment, a shout from the populace without, announced the arrival of the Regent. His noble figure was now disencumbered of armour; and with no more sumptuous garb than the simple plaid of his country, he appeared effulgent in manly beauty and the glory of his recent deeds. De Valence frowned heavily as he looked on him, and thanked his fortunate stars, that Helen was absent from sharing the admiration which seemed to animate every breast. The eyes of Lady Mar at once told the libertine De Valence, too well-read in the like expressions, what were her sentiments towards the young Regent; and the blushes, and eager civilities of the ladies around, displayed how much they were struck with the now fully-discerned, and unequalled graces of his person. Lady Mar forgot all in him. And, indeed, so much did he seem the idol of every heart, that, from the two venerable lords of

Loch-awe and Bothwell, to the youngest man in company, all ears hung on his words, all eyes upon his countenance.

The entertainment was conducted with every regard to female delicacy; and that chivalric courtesy, which a noble conqueror always pays to the vanquished. Indeed from the wit and pleasantry which passed from the opposite side of the tables, and in which the ever gay Murray was the leader, it rather appeared a convivial meeting of friends, than an assemblage of mortal foes. During the banquet, the bards sung legends of the Scottish worthies who had brought honour to their nation in days of old; and as the board was cleared, they struck at once into a full chorus. Wallace caught the sound of his own name, accompanied with epithets of the most extravagant praise; he rose hastily from his chair, and with his hand motioned them to cease. They obeyed; but Lady Mar, remonstrating with him, he gaily said, it was an

ill omen to sing a warrior's actions, till he were incapable of performing more; and therefore he begged, she would excuse him from hearkening to his.

"Then let us change their strains to a dance?" replied the Countess.

"A hall! a hall!" exclaimed Murray, springing from his seat, delighted with the proposal.

"I have no objection," answered Wallace; and putting the hand she presented to him, into that of Lord de Warenne, he added, "I am not of a sufficiently gay temperament, to grace the change; but this earl may not have the same reason for declining so fair a challenge!"

Lady Mar blushed with mortification, for she had thought that Wallace would not venture to refuse before so many; but following the impulse of De Warenne's arm, she proceeded to the other end of the hall, where the younger lords of both countries, by Murray's quick arrangement, had already singled out ladies, and were marshalled for the dance.

As the hours moved on, the spirits of Wallace subsided from their usual tone, into a sadness which he thought might be noticed; and wishing to escape such observation (for he could not explain to those gay ones, why scenes like these ever made him sorrowful) and whispering to Mar, that he would go for an hour to visit Montgomery, he withdrew unnoticed by all but his watchful enemy.

De Valence, who had before heard him inquire of Lady Ruthven why Helen was not present; and who hovered uneasily about his steps, was within hearing of this whisper also, and with a satanic joy the dagger shook in his hand. He knew that Wallace had many a solitary place to pass, between Snawdoun and the citadel; and the company being too pleasantly absorbed, to mark who entered or disappeared, he took an opportunity, and stole out after him.

But for once, the impetuous fury of hatred met a temporary disappointment. While De Valence was cowering, like a

thief, under the eves of the houses, and prowling along the lonely paths to the citadel; while he started at every noise, as if it came to apprehend him for his meditated deed; or rushed forward at the sight of any solitary passenger, whom his eager vengeance almost mistook for Wallace; Wallace himself had taken a different track.

As he walked through the illuminated arch-ways which led from the hall, he perceived a darkened passage. Hoping by that avenue, to quit the palace unobserved, he immediately struck into it; for he was aware, that should he go the usual way, and the crowd at the gate recognise him, he should not escape their acclamations. He followed this passage for a considerable time, and at last was stopped by a door. It yielded to his hand, and entering, he found himself at the entrance of a large building. He advanced; and passing a high screen of carved oak; by a dim light, which gleamed from waxen

tapers on the altar, he perceived it to be the chapel.

"A happy transition," said he to himself, "from the jubilant scene I have now left, from the grievous scenes, I have lately shared! Here, gracious God!" thought he, "may I, unseen by any other eye, pour out my whole soul to thee. And here will I, before thy footstool, declare my thanksgiving for thy mercies; and with my tears, wash from my soul the stains of the blood I have been compelled to shed!"

While advancing towards the altar, he was startled by a voice which proceeded from the quarter whither he was going, and with low, and gently-breathed fervour, uttered these words: "Defend him, Heavenly Father! Defend him day and night from the devices of this wicked man: and above all, during these hours of revelry and confidence, guard his unshielded breast from treachery and death." The voice faltered, and added with greater

agitation, "Ah, unhappy me, that I should be the cause of danger to the hope of Scotland; that I should pluck peril on the head of William Wallace!" A figure, which had been hidden by the rails of the altar, with these words rose suddenly, and stretching forth her clasped hands, exclaimed aloud, "But thou, who knowest I had no blame in this, wilt not afflict me by his danger! Thou wilt deliver him, O God, out of the hand of this cruel foe!"

Wallace was not more astonished, at hearing that some one in whom he reposed, was his secret enemy; than at seeing Lady Helen in that place at that hour; and addressing Heaven for him. There was something so celestial in the maid, as she stood in her white robes, true emblems of her own innocence, before the footstool of God; that, although her prayers were delivered with a pathos, which told they sprang from a heart more than commonly interested in their object;

yet, every word and look, breathed so eloquently the virgin purity of her soul, the hallowed purpose of her petitions, that Wallace, drawn by the sympathy with which kindred virtues ever attract spirit to spirit, did not hesitate to discover himself. He stepped from the shadow which involved him: the pale light of the tapers shone upon his advancing figure. Helen's eyes fell upon him, as she turned round. She was transfixed and silent. He moved forward. "Lady Helen," said he, in a respectful and even tender voice. At the sound, a fearful rushing of shame seemed to overwhelm all her faculties; for she knew not how long he might have been in the church, and that he had not heard her beseech Heaven to make him less the object of her thoughts. She sunk on her knees beside the altar, and covered her face with her hands.

The action, the confusion, might have betrayed her secret to Wallace. But he

only thought of her pious invocations for his safety; he only remembered, that it was she who had given a holy grave to the only woman he could ever love: and full of gratitude, as a pilgrim would approach a saint, he drew near her. "Holiest of earthly maids," said he, kneeling down beside her, "in this lonely hour, in the sacred presence of Almighty Purity, receive my soul's thanks for the prayers I have this moment heard you breathe for me! They are more precious to me, Lady Helen, than the generous plaudits of my country; they are a greater reward to me, than would have been the crown, with which Scotland sought to endow me; for, do they not give me what all the world cannot, the protection of Heaven!"

"I would pray for it!" softly answered Helen, but not venturing to look up.

"And the prayer of the virtuous, we know *availeth much!* what then may I not expect from thine? Continue to offer up that incense for me," added he, "and

I shall march forth to-morrow with redoubled strength; for, I shall yet think, holy maid, that I have a Marion to pray for me on earth as well as in heaven!"

Lady Helen's heart beat at these words; but it was with no unhallowed emotion. She withdrew her hands from her face, and clasping them, looked up:—"Marion will indeed echo all my prayers; and He who reads my heart, will, I trust, grant them! They are for your life, Sir William Wallace," added she, turning to him with agitation, "for it is menaced."

"I will inquire by whom," answered he, "when I have first paid my duty at this altar, for guarding it so long. And dare I, daughter of goodness, to ask you to unite the voice of your gentle spirit with the secret one of mine? I would beseech Heaven for pardon on my own transgressions; I would ask of its mercy to establish the liberty of Scotland. Pray with me, Lady Helen; and the invocations our souls utter, will meet the pro-

mise of him who said, *Where two faithful hearts are, there am I in the midst of them!*"

Helen looked on him with a holy smile, and pressing the crucifix which she held, to her lips, bowed her head on it in mute assent. Wallace threw himself prostrate on the steps of the altar; and the fervour of his sighs alone, breathed to his companion the deep devotion of his soul. How the time past he knew not; so was he absorbed in the communion, which his spirit held with the sublimest of beings. But the bell of the palace striking the matin hour, reminded him that he was yet on earth; and looking up, his eyes met those of Helen. His devotional cross hung on his arm: he kissed it:—"Wear this, holy maid," said he, "in remembrance of this hour!" She bowed her fair neck, and he put the consecrated chain over it: "Let it bear witness to a friendship," added he, clasping her

hands in his, "which will be cemented by eternal ties in heaven!"

Helen bent her face upon his hands: he felt the sacred tears, of so pure a compact, upon them; and while he looked up, as if he thought the spirit of his Marion hovered near, to bless a communion so remote from all infringement of the sentiment he had dedicated for ever to her; Helen raised her head—and with a terrible shriek, throwing her arms around the body of Wallace, he that moment felt an assassin's steel in his back, and she fell senseless on his breast. He started on his feet, and a dagger fell from his garments to the ground, but the hand which had struck the blow he could no where see. To search further was then impossible, for Helen lay on his bosom like one dead. Not doubting that she had seen his assailant, and so had fainted, he was laying her on the steps of the altar, that he might bring some water from the bason

of the chapel to recover her, when he saw that her arm was not only stained with his blood, but streaming with her own. The dagger had pierced through it in reaching him.

"Execrable villain!" cried he, turning cold at the sight; and instantly comprehending that it was to defend him she had thrown her arms around him, he exclaimed in a voice of agony, "Are two of the most matchless women the earth ever saw, to die for me!" Trembling with terror, and with renewed grief; for the terrible scene of Ellerslie, was now brought in all its horrors before him; he tore off her veil to stanch the blood; but the wound was too deep for his surgery: and loosing every other consideration, in fears for her life, he again took her in his arms, and carried her out of the chapel. He hastened through the dark passage, and almost flying along the lighted galleries, entered the hall. The noisy fright of the servants, as he broke through their ranks at the

door, alarmed the revellers; and turning round, what was their astonishment, to behold the Regent pale and bloody, bearing in his arms a lady apparently lifeless, and covered with the same dreadful hue!

Mar, instantly recognised his daughter; and rushed towards her with a cry of horror. Wallace sunk with his breathless load upon the nearest bench, and while her head rested on his bosom, ordered that assistance should be brought. Lady Mar gazed on the spectacle, with a benumbed dismay. None present durst ask a question, till a priest drawing near, unbound the arm of Helen, and discovered its deep wound.

"Who has done this?" cried Mar, turning to Wallace, with all the anguish of a father in his countenance.

"I know not;" replied he; "but I believe some villain who aimed at my life."

"Where is Lord de Valence?" exclaimed Mar, suddenly recollecting his menaces against Wallace.

"I am here:" replied he, in a composed voice: "would you have me seek the assassin?"

"No, no;" cried the Earl, ashamed of his suspicion; "but here has been some foul work,—and my daughter is slain."

"Oh, not so!" cried Murray, who, from her first appearance, had hurried towards her, and knelt at her side: "she will not die—so much excellence cannot die." A stifled groan from Wallace, accompanied by a look, told Murray that he had known the death of similar excellence: with this unanswerable appeal, the young chieftain dropped his head on the other hand of Helen; and could any one have seen his face, buried as it was in her robes, they would have beheld tears of agony drawn from that ever gay heart.

The wound was closed, and Helen sighed convulsively. At this intimation of recovery, the priest made all, excepting those who supported her, stand back. But as Lady Mar, reluctant to withdraw,

lingered near Wallace, she saw the paleness of his countenance turn to a deadly hue, and his eyes closing, without a gasp he sunk back on the bench. Her shrieks now resounded through the hall; and falling into hysterics, she was taken into the gallery, while the more collected Lady Ruthven remained to attend the victims before her.

Lord de Valence, at the instant Wallace fell, losing all self-command, caught hold of De Warenne's arm, and whispering, "I thought it was sure;—Long live King Edward!" rushed out of the hall. These words revealed to De Warenne who was the assassin; and though struck to the soul with the turpitude of the deed, he thought the honour of England would not allow him to accuse the perpetrator; and he remained silent.

The inanimate body of Wallace was now drawn from under that of Helen; and in the act, another priest who had arrived, discovered the adjoining tapestry

clotted with blood, and that the chieftain's back was also bathed in the same vital stream. Having found his wound, the priests laid him on the ground, and were administering their balsams when Helen opened her eyes. Her mind was too strongly possessed with the horror which had entered it before she became insensible, to lose the consciousness of her fears, and immediately looking around her with an aghast countenance, her sight met the outstretched body of Wallace. "Oh! is it so?" cried she, throwing herself into the bosom of her father. He understood what she meant:—"He lives, my child! but he is wounded like yourself. Have courage; revive for his sake, and for mine!"

"Helen! Helen! dear Helen!" cried Murray, clinging to her hand, "while you live, what that loves you can die!"

While these acclamations surrounded her couch, Edwin, in speechless apprehension, supported the insensible head of

Wallace; and De Warenne, inwardly execrating the perfidy of De Valence, knelt down to assist the priests in their office.

A few minutes longer, and the stanched blood refluxing to the chieftain's heart, he too opened his eyes; and instantly starting on his arm—"What has happened to me?" demanded he; "where is Lady Helen?"

At his voice, which aroused Helen, who, believing that he was indeed dead, was relapsing into her former state, she could only press her father's hand to her lips, as if he had given the life she so valued, and bursting into a shower of relieving tears, breathed out her rapturous thanks to God. Her low murmurs, reached the ears of Wallace; and looking round to Edwin, whose colourless cheek told the depth of his fears; "We both live;" said he: "your cousin speaks; and it restores me, to hear her voice. Let me declare my gratitude to my sweet preserver."

The dimness having left his eyes; and the blood (the extreme loss of which had alone caused him to swoon) being stopped by an embalmed bandage, he felt no further inconvenience from his wound; and rising, hastened to the side of Helen. Lord Mar softly whispered his daughter: "Sir William Wallace is at your feet, my dearest child; look on him and tell him that you live."

"I am well, my father," returned she, in a faltering voice, "and, may it indeed please the Almighty to preserve him!"

"I am alive and well;" answered Wallace: "but thanks to God, and to you, that I am so! Had not that lovely arm received the greater part of the dagger, it must have reached my heart."

An exclamation of horror, at what might have been, burst from the lips of Edwin. Helen could have re-echoed it, but she now held her feelings under too severe a rein to allow them so to speak.

"Thanks to the protector of the just," cried she, "for your preservation! when I raised my eyes, I saw the assassin with his gown so held before his face, that I could not discern who he was; but the dagger was aimed at the back of Sir William Wallace! How I caught it, I cannot tell, for I seemed to die on the instant."

Lady Mar, having recovered, re-entered the hall just as Wallace had knelt down beside Helen. Maddened with the sight of the man on whom her soul doted, in such a position before her rival, she advanced hastily, and in a voice which she vainly attempted to render composed and gentle, sternly said, "Alarmed as I have been by your apparent danger, I cannot but be uneasy at the attendant circumstances: tell me, therefore, and satisfy this good company, how it happened that you should be with the Regent; when I supposed you were an invalid in your room, and he was gone to the citadel?"

A crimson blush overspread the cheeks

of Helen at this question; for, it was delivered in a tone which insinuated, that something more than accident had occasioned their meeting: but, as innocence dictated, she answered;—"I was in the chapel at prayers—Sir William Wallace entered with the same design; and at the moment he desired me to mingle mine with his, this assassin appeared. I saw his dagger raised against our protector, and I saw no more."

There was not a heart present that did not give credence to this account, but the polluted one of Lady Mar. She smiled incredulously, and turning to the company, "Our noble friends will accept my apology, if in so delicate an investigation, I should beg that my family alone may be present."

Wallace, who perceived the tendency of her words, and doubting the impression they might make on the minds of men ignorant of the virtues of Lady Helen, hastily rose. "For once," cried he, "I

must counteract a lady's orders. It is my wish, lords, that you will not leave this place, till I explain how I came to disturb the devotions of Lady Helen. Wearied with festivities in which my alienated heart can so little share, I thought to pass an hour with Lord Montgomery in the citadel; and in seeking to avoid the crowded avenues of the palace, I entered the chapel. To my surprise I found Lady Helen there. I heard her pray for the happiness of Scotland, for the safety of her defenders; and, my mind being in a frame to join in such petitions, I apologized for my unintentional intrusion, and begged permission to mingle my devotions with hers. Nay, impressed, and privileged by the sacredness of the place, I presumed still further; and before the altar of Purity, poured forth my gratitude for the duties she had paid to the remains of my murdered wife. It was at this moment, while clasping the sweet saint's hands in mine, that the assassin

appeared. I heard Lady Helen scream; I felt her fall on my breast; and at that instant, the dagger entered my back.

"This is the history of our meeting: and the assassin, whomsoever he may be; and how long soever he was in the church, before he sought to perpetrate the deed; were he to speak, and capable of uttering truth, could declare no other."

"But where is he to be found?" intemperately demanded Lady Mar.

"If his testimony be necessary to validate mine," returned Wallace with dignity, "I believe Lady Helen can name him."

"Name him, Helen; name him, my dear cousin;" cried Murray: "that I may have some link with thee, O! let me avenge this deed! Tell me his name, and so yield me all that thou canst now bestow on Andrew Murray!"

There was something in the tone of Murray's voice that penetrated to the heart of Helen. "I cannot name him whom I suspect, to any but Sir William

Wallace. And I would not do it to him," replied she, "were it not to warn him against future danger. I did not see the assassin's face; therefore, how dare I set you to take vengeance on one who perchance may be innocent?—I forgive him my blood, since Heaven has spared to Scotland its protector's."

"If he be a Southron," cried Baron Hilton, coming forward, "name him, gracious lady; and I will answer for it, that were he the son of a king, he should meet death from our monarch, for this unknightly outrage."

"I thank your zeal, brave chieftain;" replied she; "but I would not abandon to certain death, even the wicked man. May he repent!—I will name him to Sir William Wallace alone; and when he knows his secret enemy, I trust he will guard against his emissaries. Meanwhile, my father, I would withdraw." Then whispering him, she was lifted in his arms and Murray's, and carried from the hall.

As she moved away, she cast her eyes on Wallace. He rose, and would have spoken; but she waved her hand to him with an expression in her countenance of an adieu so heroic, yet so tender, that, feeling as if he were parting with a beloved sister who had just risked her life for him, and whom he might never see again, he uttered not a word; but turning another way, left the hall by an opposite door.

CHAP. X.

DAY-break gleamed over the sky, before the wondering spectators of the late extraordinary scene, had dispersed to their quarters.

De Warenne was so well convinced, by what had dropped from De Valence, of

his having been the assassin, that when they met at sunrise, to take horse for the borders, he made him no other salutation, than that he "Was surprised, not to find him under an arrest for the last night's work."

"The wily Scot knew better," replied De Valence, "than so to expose the reputation of the lady. He knew that she received the wound in his arms; and he durst not seize me, for fear I should proclaim it."

"He cannot fear that," replied De Warenne, "for he has proclaimed it himself. He has told every particular of his meeting with Lady Helen in the chapel; even her sheltering him with *her* arms; so there is nothing for you to declare, but your own infamy. For infamous I must call it, Lord Aymer; and nothing but the respect I owe my country, prevents me pointing the eyes of the indignant Scots to you; nothing but the stigma your exposure would bring upon the Eng-

lish name, could make me conceal the deed."

De Valence laughed at this speech of De Warenne's. "Why, my Lord Warden," said he, "have you been taking lessons in heroics, of this doughty Scot, that you talk thus? It was not with such sentiments, you overthrew the Princes of Wales, and made the Kings of Ireland fly before you! You would tell another story, were your own interest in question; and I can tell you, that my vengeance is not yet satisfied. I will yet see the brightness of those eyes, on which the proud daughter of Mar hangs so fondly, extinguished in death. Her voice shall not arouse that now ready ear! Maid or wife, Helen shall be torn from his arms; and if I cannot make her a virgin bride, she shall at least be mine as his widow;—for I swear, not to be disappointed."

"Shame, De Valence! I should blush to owe my courage to rivalry, or my

perseverance in the field to a fictious passion! you know, what you have confessed to me, were once your views on Helen Mar."

"Every man according to his constitution!" returned De Valence, and shrugging his shoulders, he mounted his horse.

The cavalcade of Southrons now appeared. They were met on the Carse by the Regent; who, recovered from any ill effects of his wound: advanced, at the head of ten thousand men, to escort his prisoners to the borders. Lord Mar, by Helen's desire, had informed Wallace what had been the threats of De Valence, and that she suspected him to be the assassin. But this suspicion was put beyond a doubt by the evidence of the dagger, which Edwin sought, and found in the chapel: its hilt was enamelled with the martlets of De Valence.

At sight of it, a general indignation filled the Scottish chiefs; and assembling round their Regent, with one breath

they demanded, that the false earl should be detained, and punished as became the honour of nations, for so execrable a breach of all laws, human and divine. Wallace replied, that he believed the attack to have been instigated by a personal motive; and, therefore, as he was the object, not the state of Scotland, he should merely acquaint the earl that his villany was known; and let the shame of disgrace be his punishment.

"Ah!" observed Lord Bothwell, "men who trample on conscience, soon get over shame."

"True;" replied Wallace; "but I suit my actions to my own mind, not to my enemy's. And if he cannot feel dishonour, I will not so far disparage myself, as to think so worthless a creature deserving my resentment."

While he was quieting the re-awakened indignation of his nobles, whose blood began to boil afresh at sight of their Regent's enemy; the Southron lords, con-

ducted by Lord Mar, approached. When that nobleman drew near, Wallace's first inquiry was for Lady Helen. The Earl informed him, that he had received intelligence of her having slept without fever, and that she was not awake when the messenger came off with his good tidings. That all was likely to be well with her, was great comfort to Wallace; and with an unruffled brow, riding up to the squadron of Southrons, which was headed by De Warenne and De Valence, he immediately approached the latter, and drawing out the dagger, held it towards him: "The next time, Sir Earl," said he, "that you draw this dagger, let it be with a more knightly aim than assassination!"

De Valence, surprised, took it in confusion, and without answer; but his countenance told the state of his mind. He was humbled by the man he hated; and while a sense of the disgrace he had incurred, tore his proud soul, he had not

dignity enough to acknowledge the generosity of his enemy, in again giving him a life which his treachery had so often forfeited. Having taken the dagger, he wreaked the boiling vengeance of his malice upon the senseless steel, and breaking it asunder, threw the pieces into the air; and turning from Wallace with an affected disdain, said to the shivered weapon, "You shall not betray me again!"

"Nor you betray our honours, Lord de Valence;" exclaimed Earl de Warenne; "and, therefore, though the nobleness of Sir William Wallace leaves you at large after this outrage on his person, we will assert our innocence of connivance with the deed; and, as your commanding officer, I order you under an arrest, till we pass the Scottish lines."

"'Tis well," cried Baron Hilton, "that such is your determination, my lord; else no honest man could have continued in

the same company with one who has so tarnished the English name."

De Valence, with an ironical smile, looked towards the squadron which approached to obey De Warenne, and said, "Though it be dishonour to you, to march with me out of Scotland; the proudest of you all, will deem it honour to be allowed to return with me hither. I have an eye on those who stand with cap in hand to rebellion. And for you, Sir William Wallace," added he, turning to him, who was reining in his impatient steed; "I hold no terms with a rebel; and deem all honour, that would rid my sovereign and the earth of such low-born arrogance."

Before Wallace could answer, he saw De Valence struck from his horse by the Lochaber-axe of Edwin. Indignant at the insult offered his beloved commander, he had suddenly raised his arm, and aiming a blow with all his strength, the earl

was immediately stunned, and precipitated to the ground. Seeing him down, he leaped on his breast; and striking him across the head with the flat part of his sword, exclaimed in a voice of detestation, "Wretch! were I like yourself, I would now take your worthless life:—but let us meet in the field; and we part no more, till I have rid the world of such a lawless ingrate!"

At sight of the fall of the Southron chieftain, the Scottish troops, aware of there being some misunderstanding between the Regent and the English lords, uttered a shout. Wallace, to prevent accidents, on the instant sent to the lines to appease the tumult; and throwing himself off his horse, hastened to the prostrate earl. A fearful pause reigned throughout the Southron ranks. They did not know but that the enraged Scots would now fall on them, and in spite of the Regent, exterminate them on the spot.—The troops were running forward,

when Wallace's messengers arrived and checked them; and himself calling to Edwin, stopped his farther chastisement of the recovering earl.

"Edwin, you have done wrong;" cried he; "give me that sword, which you have sullied by raising it against a prisoner totally in our power."

Edwin, with a vivid blush, resigned the weapon to his general; yet, with his foot still on the breast of De Valence, he said, "But have you not granted life, twice to this prisoner? and has he not in return, raised his hand against your life and Lady Helen; you pardon him again! —and in the moment of your clemency, he insults the Lord Regent of Scotland in the face of both nations!—I could not hear this, and live, without making him feel that you have those about you who will not forgive such crimes."

"Edwin;" returned Wallace; "had not the Lord Regent power to punish? And if he see right to hold his hand

from taking vengeance, those who do it for him, invade his dignity.—I should be unworthy the honour of protecting a brave nation should I stoop to tread on every reptile that stings me in my path.—Leave Lord de Valence to the sentence his commander has pronounced. And, as an expiation for your having offended military and moral law this day, you must remain at Stirling till I return into Scotland."

De Valence, hardly awake from the stupor which the blow of the battle-axe had occasioned, (for indignation had given to the young warrior the strength of manhood) was raised from the ground; and soon after, coming to himself, and being made sensible of what had happened, he was taken, foaming with rage and mortification, into the centre of the Southron lines.

Lord Montgomery, alarmed at the confusion he saw from the distance of the rear, ordered his litter round to the front;

and hearing all that had passed, joined with De Warenne in pleading for the abashed Edwin.

"His youth and zeal," cried Montgomery, "are sufficient to excuse the intemperance of the deed."

"No!" interrupted Edwin; "I have offended, and I will expiate. Only, my honoured lord," said he, approaching Wallace, while he checked the emotion which would have flowed from his eyes; "when I am absent, sometimes remember that it was Edwin's love which hurried him to this disgrace!"

"My dear Edwin," returned Wallace, "there are many impetuous spirits in Scotland, who need the lesson I now enforce upon you; and they will be brought to maintain the law of honour, when they see that their Regent spares not its slightest violation, even when committed by his best beloved friend.— Farewel till we meet again!"

Edwin kissed Wallace's hand in si-

lence; it was now wet with his tears; and drawing his helmet hastily over his eyes, he retired into the rear of Lord Mar's party. That nobleman, soon after took leave of the Regent; who, placing himself at the head of his legions, the trumpets blew the signal of march. Edwin, at the sound, which a few minutes before he would have greeted with so much joy, felt his grief-swoln heart give way; he sobbed aloud, and galloped to a distance to hide from all eyes the violence of his regrets. The trampling of many horses rolled over the ground like departing thunder. Edwin at last stole a look towards the plain; he beheld a vast cloud of dust, but no more the squadrons of his friend.

CHAP. XI.

As Wallace pursued his march along the once fertile and well-peopled vallies of Clydesdale, their present appearance affected him like the sight of a friend whom he had seen depart in all the graces of youth and prosperity; but met again, overcome with disease and wretchedness.

The pastures of Carstairs on the east of the river, which used at this season to be whitened with sheep, and sending forth the lowings of abundant cattle; and the hills, which had teemed with reapers rejoicing in the harvest; were now laid waste and silent. The plain presented one wide flat of desolation. Where once was the enamelled meadow, a dreary swamp extended its vapory surface: and

the road, which a happy peasantry no longer trod, lay choked up with thistles and rank grass; while birds, and animals of chase, would spring from its thickets on the lonely traveller, to tell him, by their wildness, that he was distant from the abode of men. The remains of villages were visible: but the blackness of ashes, marked the walls of the ruined dwellings.

Wallace felt that he was passing through the country in which his Marion had been rifled of her life; and as he moved along, nature, all around, seemed to have partaken her death. As he rode over the moors which lead towards the district of Crawford-Lammington, those hills amidst which the beloved of his soul first drew breath, he became totally silent. Time rolled back; he was no longer the Regent of Scotland, but the fond lover of Marion Braidfoot. His heart beat, as it was wont to do in turning his horse down the defile which led direct to Lammington: but

the scene was completely changed: the groves, in which he had so often wandered with her, were gone: they had been cut down for the very purpose of destroying that place, which had once been the abode of beauty and innocence, and of all the tender charities.

One shattered tower(m) alone, remained of the castle of Lammington. The scathing of fire embrowned its sides; and the uprooted garden, marked where the ravager had been. While his army marched before him along the heights of Crawford, Wallace slowly moved forward, musing on the scene. In turning the angle of a shattered wall, his horse started; and the next moment he perceived an aged figure with a beard white as snow, and wrapped in a dark plaid, appear emerging from the ground. At sight of the apparition, Murray, who accompanied his friend, and had hitherto kept silence, suddenly exclaimed, " I conjure you, honest Scot, ghost or man, give us a subject for

conversation! and, as a beginning, pray tell me to whom this ruined tower belonged?"

The tongue of his own country, and above all, the sight of two warriors in the Scottish garb, encouraged the old man, and stepping out on the ground, he drew near to Murray. "Ruined, indeed, sir;" replied he; "and its story is very sad. When the Southrons who hold the fortresses in Annandale, heard of the brave acts of Sir William Wallace, they sent an army to destroy this castle and domains, which were his in right of his wife, the Lady Marion of Lammington. Sweet creature! I hear they most foully murdered her in Lanerk."

Murray was struck speechless at this information: for, had he suspected that there was any private reason with Wallace, for his silent lingering about this desolate spot, he would rather have drawn him away, than have stopped to ask questions.

"And did you know the Lady Marion, venerable old man?" inquired Wallace, in a voice so descriptive of what was passing in his heart, that the man turned towards him; and struck with his noble mien, he pulled off his bonnet, and bowing, answered: "Did I know her? She was nursed on these knees. And my wife, who cherished her sweet infancy, is now within that brae. It is now our only home; for the Southrons burnt us out of Lammington castle, where our young lady left us, when she went to be married to the brave young Wallace. He was as handsome a youth as ever the sun shone upon; and he loved my lady from a boy. I never shall forget the day when she stood on the top of that rock, and let a garland he had made for her, fall into the Clyde. Without more ado, never caring because it is the deepest here of any part of the river, he jumps in after it; and I after him: and well I did, for when I caught him by his bonny

golden locks, he was insensible. His head had struck against a stone in the plungê, and a great cut was over his forehead. God bless him, a sorry scar it left! but many, I warrant, has the Southron now made in his comely countenance. I have never seen him since he grew a man."

Gregory, the honest steward of Lammington, was soon recognised in this old man's relation: but time and hardship had so altered his appearance, that Wallace could not have recollected the ruddy age and active figure of his well-remembered companion, in the shaking limbs and pallid visage of the hoary speaker. When he ended, the chief threw himself off his horse. He approached the old man: with one hand he took off his helmet, and with the other putting back the same golden locks, he said, "Was the scar you speak of, any thing like this?" His face was now close to the eye of Gregory; who, in the action, the

words, and the mark, immediately recognising the young play-mate of his happiest days, with an exclamation of joy, threw himself on his neck and wept; then looking up, with tears rolling over his cheeks, he exclaimed, "O Power of Mercy, take me now to thyself, since my eyes have seen the deliverer of Scotland!"

"Not so, my venerable friend;" returned Wallace; "you must yet make these desolated regions bloom anew. Decorate them, old man, as you would do the tomb of your mistress, with every produce of the year. I give them to you and yours. Marion and I have no posterity! Let her foster-brother, if he still live, as he drew the same milk with her, let him be now the laird of Lammington."

"He does live," replied the old man, "but the shadow of what he was. In attempting, with a few resolute lads, to defend these domains, he was severely wounded. His companions were all slain;

and I found him on the other side of my lady's garden, left for dead. We fled with him to the woods; and there remained, till all about here was laid in ashes. Finding the cruel Southrons had made a general waste; yet fearful of fresh incursions, (should any survivors appear above ground,) we, and the adjacent cottagers, who, with ourselves, had been driven from their homes, dug us these subterraneous dwellings; (n) and ever since have lived like fairies in the green-hill side. My son, and his young wife and babes, are now in our cavern, much reduced by sickness and want; for famine is here. Alas, the Southrons in conquering Scotland, have not gained a kingdom, but made a desert!"

"And we must make it smile again!" returned Wallace; "I go to reap the harvests of Northumberland. What our enemies have ravished hence, in part they shall refund: a few days and your granaries shall overflow. Meanwhile, I leave

with you my friend;" said he, turning to Murray: "at the head of five hundred men, he shall to-morrow commence the reduction of every English fortress that yet casts a shade on the stream of our native Clyde; for, when the sun next rises, the Southrons will have passed the Scottish borders, and I shall again have blown the trumpet of war."

Gregory, finding that his lord was going to depart, fell at his feet, and begged that he might be allowed to bring his Nannie, to see the husband of her once dear child.

"Not now," replied Wallace, "I could not bear the interview—she shall see me when I return."

He then spoke apart to Murray; who cheerfully acquiesced in a commission, that promised him, not only the glory of being a conqueror, but the private satisfaction, he hoped, of driving the Southron garrison out of his own paternal castle. To send such news to his noble

father at Stirling, would indeed be a wreath of honour to his aged, but yet warlike brow. It was arranged between the young chief, and his commander, that watch-towers should be thrown up on every conspicuous eminence throughout the country, from the heights of Clydesdale, to those which skirted the Scottish borders; whence concerted signals, of victories, or other information, might be severally interchanged. These preliminaries adjusted, the Regent's bugle brought Ker and Sir John Graham to his side. The appointed number of men were left with Murray; and Wallace joining his other chieftains, bade his friend and honest servant adieu!

He now awakened to a sense of the present scene, and saw his legions traverse hill and dale till they entered on the once luxuriant banks of the Annan. This territory, of some of the proudest lords of Scotland, lay in more terrific ruin than even the tracks he had left. There,

reigned the silence of the tomb; here, existed the expiring agonies of men left to perish. More recent marks of devastation, smoked from the blood-stained earth; and in the midst of some barren waste, a few houseless wretches would rush forward at sight of the Regent, throw themselves before his horse, and beg a morsel of food for their famishing selves and dying infants. "Look;" cried an almost frantic mother, holding towards him the living skeleton of a child; "my husband was slain by the Southrons who hold Lochmaben castle; my subsistence was carried away, and myself turned forth to give birth to this child on the rocks. I have fed till this hour on their berries; but I die, and my child expires before me!" "Here are our young ones," cried a second group, with shrieks of despair, "exposed to equal miseries. Give us bread, Regent of Scotland, or we perish!"

Wallace turned to his troops: "Fast

for a day, my brave friends," cried he; "lay the provisions you have brought with you, before these hapless people. To-morrow, you shall feast largely on Southron tables."

He was instantly obeyed. As his men marched on, they threw their loaded wallets amongst the famishing groups; and followed by their blessings, descended with augmented speed the ravaged hills of Annandale. Dawn was brightening the dark head of Brunswark, as they advanced towards the Scottish boundary. At a distance, like a wreath of white vapours, lay the English camp along the southern bank of the Esk. Wallace, at this sight, ordered his bugles to sound: they were immediately answered by those of the opposite host. The heralds of both armies advanced; and the sun, rising from behind the eastern hills, shone full upon the legions of Scotland winding down the romantic precipices of Wauchope.

Two hours arranged every preliminary requisite to the exchange of prisoners; and when the clarion of the trumpet announced, that each party was to pass over the river to the side of its respective country, Wallace stood in the midst of his chieftains, to receive the last adieus of his illustrious captives. When De Warenne approached, the Regent took off his helmet. The Southron had already his in his hand. "Farewel, gallant Scot:" said he: "if ought could imbitter this moment of recovered freedom, it is, that I leave a man, I so revere, still confident in a finally hopeless cause!"

"It would not be the less just, were it indeed desperate;" replied Wallace; "but had not Heaven shewn on which side it fought, I should not have had the honour of thus bidding the brave De Warenne farewel."

The earl passed on; and the other lords, with grateful and respectful looks,

paid their obeisance. The litter of Montgomery drew near: the curtains were thrown open: Wallace stretched out his hand to him; "The prayers of sainted innocence are thine!"

"Never more shall her angel spirit behold me here, as you now behold me;" returned Montgomery: "I must be a traitor to virtue, before I ever again bear arms against Sir William Wallace." Wallace pressed his hand, and they parted.

The escort which guarded De Valence advanced; and the proud earl, seeing where his enemy stood, took off his gauntlet, and throwing it fiercely towards him, exclaimed, "Carry that to your minion Ruthven, and tell him, that the hand which wore it, will yet be most tremendously revenged!"

As the Southron ranks filed off towards Carlisle, those of the returning Scottish prisoners, approached their deliverer. Now it was that the full clangor of joy,

burst from every breast, and triumph-breathing instrument, in the Scottish legions; now it was, that the echoes rang with loud huzzas of "Long live the valiant Wallace, who brings our nobles out of captivity! Long live our matchless Regent!"

As these shouts rent the air, the lords Badenoch and Athol drew near. The princely head of the former, bent with proud acknowledgment, to the mild dignity of Wallace. Badenoch's penetrating eye in a moment saw, that it was indeed the patriotic guardian of his country, to whom he bowed, and not the vain affecter of regal power. At his approach, Wallace alighted from his horse, and received his offered hand and thanks with every grace inherent in his noble nature; "I am happy," returned he, "to have been the instrument of recalling to my country, one of the princes of our royal blood." "And while one drop of it exists in Scotland,"

replied Badenoch, "its possessor must acknowledge the bravest of our defenders in Sir William Wallace."

Athol next advanced; but his gloomy countenance contradicted his words, when he attempted to utter a similar sense of obligation. Sir John Monteith was eloquent in his thanks. And Sir William Maitland, was not less sincere in gratitude, than Wallace was in joy, at having given liberty to so near a relation of Helen Mar. The rest of the captive Scots, to the number of several hundreds, were ready to kiss the feet of the man who thus restored them to their honours, their country, and their friends; and Wallace bowed his happy head under a shower of blessings, which poured on him from a thousand grateful hearts.

In pity to the wearied travellers, he ordered tents to be pitched; and for the sake of their distant friends, he dispatched a detachment to the top of Langholm hill, to send forth a smoke, (°) in token

to the Clydesdale watch, of the armistice being at an end. He had hardly seen it ascend the mountain, when Graham arrived from reconnoitring; and told him, that an English army of great strength, had formed behind his camp; and were now wheeling round, by the foot of the hills, to take the reposing Scots by surprise.

"They shall find us ready to receive them," was the prompt reply of Wallace: and his actions were ever the companions of his words. Leaving his harassed friends to rest on the banks of the Esk, he put himself at the head of 5000 men; and sending a thousand more with Sir John Graham, to pass over the Cheviots, and attack the Southrons when he should give the signal; he marched swiftly forward; and fell in with some advanced squadrons of the enemy amongst the recesses of those hills. Little expecting such a rencontre, they were marching in defiles upon the ridgy craigs, taking every

precaution to avoid the swamps which occupied the broader way.

At sight of the Scots, Lord Percy, the Southron commander, ordered a party of his archers, who were clambering round by the projecting cliffs, to discharge their arrows. The artillery of war being thus opened afresh, Wallace drew his bright sword, and waving it before him like a meteor of night, called aloud to his followers; his inspiring voice echoed from hill to hill; and the higher detachments of the Scots, pouring down upon the unprepared archers, with the resistless impetuosity of their own mountain streams, precipitated their enemies into the valley; while Wallace, with his pikemen, charging the horse in those slippery paths, drove the terrified animals into the morasses, where some sunk at once, and others, plunging, threw their riders to perish in the swamp.

Lord Percy, desperate at the confusion which now ensued, as his archers fell

headlong from the rocks, and his cavalry lay drowning before him, called up his infantry:—they appeared; but though ten thousand strong, the determined Scots met their first ranks breast to breast, and levelling them with their companions, rushed on the rest with the force of a thunder-storm. It was at this period that the signal was given from the horn of Wallace; and the division of Graham meeting the retreating Southrons as they attempted to fall back behind the hill, completed their defeat. The slaughter became dreadful, the victory decisive. Sir Ralph Latimer, the second in command, was killed in the first onset; and Lord Percy himself, after fighting as became his brave house, fled, covered with wounds, towards Alnwick.

CHAP. XII.

THIS being the season of harvest in the northern counties of England, Wallace carried his reapers, not to lay their sickles to the field, but with their swords to open themselves a way into the Southron granaries.

Wallace, meanwhile, provided for the wants of his friends on the other side of the Esk. The plunder of Percy's camp was dispatched to them; which, being abundant in all kinds of provisions, was more than sufficient to keep them in ample store till they could reach Stirling. From that point, the released chieftains promised their Regent, they would disperse to their separate estates, collect recruits, and reduce the distracted state of the country into some composed order. Wal-

lace had disclosed his wish, and mode of effecting this renovation of public happiness before he left Stirling. It contained a plan of military organization, by which each youth, able to bear arms, should, not only be instructed in the dexterous use of the weapons of war, but in the duties of subordination; and, above all, have the nature of the rights for which he was to contend, explained to him.

"They only require to be thoroughly known, to be regarded as inestimable;" added he: "but while we raise around us the best bulwark of any nation, a brave and well-disciplined people; while we teach them to defend their liberties, let us see that they deserve them. Let them be men, contending for virtuous independence; not savages, fighting for licentious freedom. We must have our youth of both sexes, in towns and villages, from the castle to the cot, taught the sublime truths of Christianity. From that root, will branch all that is needful to make

them useful members of the state, virtuous, and happy.—And while war is in our hands, let us in all things prepare for peace; that the sword may gently bend into the sickle, the dagger to the pruning-hook."

There was an expansive providence in all this, a concentrating plan of public weal, which few of the nobles had ever even glanced at, as a design conceivable for Scotland.

"Ah! my lords," replied he to their warlike objections, "deceive not yourselves with the belief, that, by the mere force of arms, a nation can render itself great and secure. Industry, temperance, and discipline amongst the people, with moderation and justice in the higher orders, are the only aliments of independence. They bring you riches and power; they make it the interest of those who might have been your enemies, to court your friendship."

The council at Stirling had received his

plan with enthusiasm. And when, on the day of his parting with the released chieftains on the banks of the Esk, he, with all the generous modesty of his nature, rather submitted his design to them as if to obtain the approbation of friends, than to enforce it with the authority of a Regent; when they saw him, thus coming down from the dictatorship to which his unrivalled talents had raised him, to equal himself still with them, all were struck with admiration; and Lord Badenoch could not but mentally exclaim, "The royal qualities of this man, can well afford this expense of humility. Bend as he will, he has only to speak, to shew his superiority over all, and to be a king again."

There was a power in the unostentatious virtues of Wallace, which, declaring themselves rather in their effects than by display, subdued the princely spirit of Badenoch even to his smile; and while the proud chieftain recollected, how he had contemned the pretensions of Bruce,

and could not brook the elevation of Baliol; how his soul was in arms, when, after he had been persuaded to acknowledge the supremacy of Edward, the throne was given to one of his rivals; he wondered at himself, to find, that his very heart bowed before the gentle and comprehensive wisdom of an untitled Regent.

Athol, alone of the group, seemed insensible to the benefits his country was receiving from its resistless protector; but he expressed his dissent from the general sentiment with no more visible sign than a cold silence.

When the messenger of Wallace arrived on the banks of the Esk with so large a booty, and the news of his complete victory over the gallant Percy, the exultation of his chieftains amounted to such enthusiasm, that had their Regent been then present, he might again have found his moderation put to the test of refusing a crown.

On Badenoch opening Wallace's dispatches, he found that they repeated his wish that the nobles would immediately proceed to the execution of the plan they had sanctioned with their approbation: they were to march directly for Stirling; and in their way, dispense the superabundance of the plunder, amongst the perishing inhabitants of the land. He then informed the earl, that while the guard he had left with him, should escort the liberated Scots beyond the Forth, the remainder of the troops would be thus disposed:—Lord Andrew Murray was to remain chief in command in Clydesdale; Sir Eustace Maxwell, to give up the wardship of Douglas to Sir John Monteith, and then advance into Annandale, to assist Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who must now have began the reduction of the castles in the west of that province. At the close of this account, Wallace added, that himself, with his brave band, were now going to sweep the English counties to the Tees

mouth; and that should Heaven bless his arms, he would send the produce round by his fleets from Berwick, to replenish the exhausted stores of the Highlands. "Next year," continued he, "I trust they will have ample harvests of their own."

And what Wallace said he would do, he did.

The country was panic-struck at the defeat of Percy; his beaten soldiers, flying in all directions before their conqueror's legions, gave such dreadful and hyperbolical accounts of their might, and of the giant prowess of their leader, that, as soon as ever the Scottish spears were seen rising the summit of any hill, or even gleaming along the horizon, every village was deserted, every cot left without inhabitant; and corn and cattle, and every kind of property, fell into the hands of the Scots.

Lord Percy lay immoveable with wounds, in his castle at Alnwick; and his

hopeless state, by intimidating his followers, contradicted the orders he gave to face the marauding enemy. Several times they attempted to obey, but as often shewed their inability; they collected under arms, but the moment their foe appeared, they fled within the castle-walls, or buried themselves in deep obscurities amongst the surrounding hills. Not a sheaf in the fields of Northumberland did the Scots leave, to knead into bread for its earl; not a head of cattle, to smoke upon his board. The country was sacked from sea to sea: but far different was its appearance, from that of the trampled vallies of Scotland. There, fire had burnt up the soil; the hand of violence had levelled the husbandman's cottage, had buried his implements in the ruins, had sacrificed himself on its smoking ashes! There, the fatherless babe, wept its unavailing wants; and at its side, sat the distracted widow, wringing her hands in speechless misery: for there lay

her murdered husband, here, her perishing child!

With such sights, was the heart of Wallace pierced, as he passed through the lowland counties of his country; nay, as he scoured the Highland districts of the Grampians, even there had he met the foot of barbarian man and cruel desolation. For thus it was that the Southron garrisons had provisioned themselves: —by robbing the poor of their bread; and when they resisted, firing their dwellings, and punishing the refractory with death.

But not so the generous enmity of Sir William Wallace. His commission was not to destroy, but to save; and though he carried his victorious army to feed on the Southron plains, and sent the harvests of England to restore the wasted fields of Scotland, yet he did no more. No fire blasted his path; no innocent blood cried against him from the ground!—When the impetuous zeal of his soldiers, flushed with victory, and in the heat of ven-

geance, would have laid several hamlets in ashes, he seized the brand from the destroying party, and throwing it into an adjoining brook; "Shew yourselves worthy of the advantages you have gained," cried he, "by the moderation with which you use them. Consider yourselves as the soldiers of the All-powerful God, who alone has conducted you to victory; for, with a few, has he not enabled us to subdue a host?—-Behave as becomes your high destiny; and debase not yourselves by imitating the hirelings of ambition, who receive as the wages of their valour, the base privilege to ravage and to murder.

"I wish you to distinguish between a spirit of reprisal in what I do, and that of retaliation, which actuates your present violence. What our enemies have robbed us of, as far as they can restore, I take again. Their bread shall feed our famishng country; their wool clothe its nakedness. But blood for blood, unless the murderer could be made to bleed, is a

doctrine abhorrent to God and to humanity. What justice is there in destroying the habitations and lives of a set of harmless people, because the like cruelty has been committed by a lawless army of their countrymen, upon our unoffending brethren? Your hearts may make the answer. But if they are hardened against the pleadings of humanity, let prudence shew your interest in leaving those men alive, and with their means unimpaired, who will produce other harvests, if need be, to fill our scantier granaries.

"Thus I reason with you, and I hope many are convinced: but they who are insensible to argument, must fear authority; and I declare, that every man who inflicts injury on the houses, or on the persons of the quiet peasantry of this land, shall be punished as a traitor to the state."

According to the different dispositions of men, this reasoning prevailed. And from the end of September, (the time

when Wallace first entered Northumberland,) to the month of November, when, (having scoured the counties of England, even to the gates of York,) he returned to Scotland; not an offence was committed which could occasion his merciful spirit regret. It was on All-Saints day, when he again approached the Esk; and so great was his spoil, that his return seemed more like some vast caravan, moving the merchandise of half the world, than the march of an army which had so lately passed that river, a famishing, though valorous host.

The outposts of Carlaveroch soon informed Maxwell, its present occupier, that the Lord Regent was in sight. At the joyful intelligence, a double smoke streamed from every watch-hill in Annandale; and Sir Eustace had hardly appeared on the Solway bank to meet his triumphant chief, when the eager speed of the rough knight of Torthorald, brought him there also. Wallace, as his proud

charger plunged into the ford, and the heavy waggons groaned after him, was welcomed to the shore by the shouts, not only of the soldiers which had followed Maxwell and Kirkpatrick, but by the people, who came in crowds to hail their preserver. The squalid hue of famine had left every face; and each smiling countenance, beaming with health, security, and gratitude, told Wallace, more emphatically than a thousand tongues, the wisdom of the means he had used to regenerate his country.

Maxwell had prepared the fortress of Lochmaben, once the residence of Bruce in Annandale, for the reception of the Regent. And thither Wallace was conducted, in prouder triumph than ever followed the chariot wheels of Cesar. Blessings were the clarions that preceded him; and hosts of people, whom he had saved when ready to perish, were voluntary actors in his pageant.

When he arrived in sight of the two

capacious lochs, which spread like lucid wings on each side of the castle, he turned to Graham; "What pity," said he, "that the rightful owner of this truly regal dwelling, does not act as becomes his blood! He might now be entering its gates as a king, and Scotland find rest under its lawful monarch."

"But he prefers being a parasite in the court of a tyrant;" replied Sir John; "and from such a school, Scotland would reject a monarch."

"But he has a son;" replied Wallace; "a brave and generous son:—I am told by Lord Montgomery who knew him in Guienne, that a nobler spirit does not exist. On his brows, my dear Graham, we must one day hope to see the crown."

"Then only as your heir, my Lord Regent," interrupted Maxwell; "for while you live, I can answer for it that no Scot will acknowledge any other ruler."

"I will first eat my own sword," cried Kirkpatrick.

At this moment, the portcullis of the gate was raised; and Maxwell, falling back to make way for the Regent, Wallace had not time to answer a sentiment, which, indeed, was so familiar to him, by his hearing it from every grateful heart, that he now hardly remarked its tendency, as it made no impression on his well-principled mind.

Ever pressing towards establishing the happiness of his country, he hastened over the splendid repast that was prepared for him; and dispensing with the ceremonials with which the zeal of Maxwell sought to display his respect for the virtues and station of his commander, he retired with Graham to write dispatches, and to apportion shares of the spoil to the necessities of the provinces. In these duties his wakeful eyes were kept open the greatest part of the night. They for whom he laboured, slept securely! That thought was rest to him. But they closed not their eyes without praying for the

sweet repose of their benefactor. And he found it; not in sleep, but in that peace of heart which the world cannot give.

CHAP. XIII.

DAY succeeded day, in the execution of these beneficial designs.—Them fulfilled, the royal halls of Lochmaben did not long detain him, who knew no rest but when he was going about doing good.—While he was thus employed, raising, with the quickness of magic, by the hands of his soldiers, the lately ruined hamlets, into well-built villages; while the grey smoke curled from a thousand russet cottages, which now spotted the sides of the snow-clad hills; while all the

lowlands, whithersoever Wallace directed his steps, breathed of comfort and abundance; he felt like the father of a large family in the midst of a happy and vast home, where every eye turned on him with reverence, every lip with gratitude.

He had hardly gone the circuit of these now cheerful valleys, when an embassy from England, which had first touched at Lochmaben, overtook him at the tower of Lammington. The embassadors were Edmund, Earl of Arundel, (a nobleman who had married the only sister of De Warenne;) and Anthony Beck, bishop of Durham.

At the moment their splendid cavalcade, escorted by a party from Sir Eustace Maxwell, entered the gate of Lammington, Wallace was in the hourly expectation of Edwin, and hearing the trampling of horses, hastened into the court-yard, attended by Gregory's grand-children. One was in his arms, two others held by his plaid, and a third played with the

sword which he had unbuckled from his side. It was a clear frosty day; and the keenness of the air brightened the complexion of Wallace, and deepened the roses of his infant companions. The leader of the Scottish escort immediately proclaimed to the embassadors that this was the Regent. At sight of so uncourtly a scene, the haughty prelate of Durham drew back.

"This man will not understand his own interest!" said he in a disdainful whisper to Lord Arundel.

"I am inclined to think, that his estimation of it will be rather beyond ours." As the earl made this reply, the officer of Maxwell informed Wallace of the names and errand of the illustrious strangers. At the mention of a Southron, the elder children ran screaming into the house; leaving the youngest, who continued on the breast of Wallace. The bishop drew near.

"We come, Sir William Wallace,"

cried the prelate, in a tone whose lordly pitch was somewhat lowered, when his eye was surprised by the god-like dignity which shone over the countenance of the man, whose domestic appearance had excited his contempt; "we come from the King of England, with a message for your private ear."—"And I hope, gallant chieftain," joined Lord Arundel, "that what we have to impart will give peace to both nations; and establish in honour, the most generous as well as the bravest of men?"

Wallace bowed to the earl's compliment; (he knew, by his title, that he must be the brother of De Warenne;) and resigning the child into the arms of Graham, with a graceful welcome conducted the Southron lords into the hall.

Lord Arundel, looking round, said, "Are we alone, Sir William?"

"Perfectly;" he replied; "and I am ready to receive any proposals of peace

which the rights of Scotland will allow me to accept."

The earl drew from his bosom a gold casket, and laying it on a table before him, addressed the Regent :—" Sir William Wallace, I come to you, not with the denunciations of an implacable liege lord, whom a rash vassal has offended ; but in the grace of the most generous of monarchs, who is anxious to convert a brave insurgent into a loyal friend. My lord the King, having heard by letters from my brother-in-law, the Earl de Warenne, of the honourable manner in which you treated the English whom the fate of battle threw into your power ; instead of sending over from Flanders a mighty army to overwhelm this rebellious kingdom ;—has deputed me, even as an embassador, to reason with the rashness he is ready to pardon. And with this diadem," continued he, drawing a circlet of jewels from the casket, " which he tore

from the brows of a Saracen prince on the ramparts of Acre, he sends the assurances of his regard for the heroic virtues of his enemy. And to these jewels, he commands me to say, that he will add a more efficient crown, if Sir William Wallace will awake from this trance of false enthusiasm, and acknowledge, as he is in duty bound to do, the supremacy of England over this country.—Speak but the word, noblest of Scots," added he, "and the bishop of Durham has orders from the generous Edward, immediately to anoint you King of Scotland;—that done, my royal master will support you in your throne, against every man who may dare to dispute your authority."

At these words, Wallace rose from his seat.—"My lord," said he, "since I took up arms for injured Scotland, I have been used to look into the hearts of men; I therefore estimate, with every due respect, the compliment which this message of your King pays to my virtues. Had he

thought that I deserved the confidence of Scotland, he would not have insulted me with offering a price for my allegiance.—To be even a crowned vassal of King Edward, is far beneath my ambition.—Take back the Saracen's diadem: it shall never dishonour the brows of him, who has sworn by the cross, to maintain the independence of Scotland, or to lay down his life in the struggle."

"Weigh well, brave sir," resumed the earl, "the consequences of this answer. Edward will soon be in England: he will march hither himself; not at the head of such armies as you have discomfited, but with countless legions; and when he falls upon any country in indignation, the places of its cities are known no more."

"Better for a brave people so to perish," replied Wallace, "than to exist in dishonour."

"What dishonour, noble Scot, can accrue from acknowledging the supremacy of your liege lord? or to what can the

proudest ambition in Scotland extend, beyond that of possessing its throne?"

"I am not such a slave," cried Wallace, "as to prefer what men might call aggrandizement, before the higher destiny of preserving to my country its liberties untrammelled.—To be the guardian of her freedom, and of the individual rights of every man born in Scottish ground, is my ambition. Ill should I perform the one duty, were I to wrong the posterity of Alexander by invading their throne; and horrible would be my treason against the other, could I sell my confiding country for a name and a bauble, into the grasp of an usurper!"

"Brand not with so unjust an epithet, the munificent Edward!" interrupted Lord Arundel; "let your own noble nature be a witness of his. Put from you all the prejudices, which the ill-conduct of his officers have excited; and you must perceive that in accepting his

terms, you will best repay your country's confidence, by giving it peace."

"So great would be my damning sin in such an acceptance," cried Wallace, "that I should be abhorred by God and man. You talk of noble minds, earl; look into your own, and will it not tell you, that in the moment a people bring themselves to put the command of their actions, and with that their consciences, into the hands of an usurper, (and that Edward is one in Scotland, our annals and his tyrannies declare,) they sell their birth-right, and become unworthy the name of men?—In that deed, they abjure the gift with which God had intrusted them; and justly, the angels of his host depart from them.—You know the sacred axiom—*Virtue is better than life!* By that we are commanded to preserve the one, at the expense of the other; and we are ready to obey.—Neither the threats nor the blandishments of Edward, have power to

shake the resolves of them who *draw the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*"(P)

"Rebellious man!" exclaimed Beck, who had listened impatiently; and whose haughty spirit could ill brook such towering language being directed to *his* sovereign; "since you dare quote scripture to sanction crime, hear my embassage. To meet the possibility of this flagitious obstinacy, I came armed with the thunder of the church; and the indignation of a justly incensed monarch. Accept his most gracious offers, delivered to you by the Earl of Arundel. Here is the cross to receive your oath of fealty," cried he, stretching it forth, as if he thought his commands were irresistible; "but beware! keep it with a truer faith than did the traitor Baliol, or expect the malediction of Heaven,—the exterminating vengeance of your liege lord!"

Wallace was not discomposed by this attack of the stormy prelate: "My lord of Durham," replied he, with his usual

tranquil air, "had your sovereign sent me such proposals as became a just king, and were possible for an honest Scot to admit, he should have found me ready to have treated him with the respect due to his rank and honour. But when he demands the sacrifice of my integrity; when he asks me to sign the deed, that would again spread this renovated land with devastation; were I to consider the glozing language of his embassy, as grace and nobleness, I should belie my own truth; which tramples alike on his menaces, and his pretended claims.—And I ask you, priest of Heaven! is he a God greater than Jehovah, that I should fear him?"

"And dost thou presume, audacious rebel!" exclaimed Beck, "that the light of Israel, deigns to shine on a barbarian nation, in arms against a hero of the cross? Reprobate that thou art, answer to thine own condemnation! Does not the church declare the claims of Edward

to be just? and who dares gainsay her decrees?"

"The voice of him you pretend to serve! He is no respecter of persons: he raises the poor from the dust; and by his arm, thy tyrant and his host are plunged in the whelming waves! Bishop, I know in whom I trust. Is the minister greater than his Lord, that I should believe the word of a synod against the declared will of God? Neither anathemas, nor armed thousands, shall make me acknowledge the supremacy of Edward. He may conquer the body, but the soul of a patriot he can never subdue."

"Then," cried Beck, suddenly rising, black with choler, and stretching his crosier over the head of Wallace, "As the rod of Moses shed plagues, miseries, and death, over the land of Egypt; I invoke the like judgments, to fall on this rebellious land, and its blasphemous leader! And thus I leave it my curse."

Wallace smiled, as the terrific words

fell from the lips of this demon in sacred guise. Lord Arundel observed him: "You despise this malediction, Sir William Wallace! I thought more piety had dwelt with so much military nobleness!"

"I should not regard the curses of a congregated world," replied Wallace, "when my conscience as loudly proclaims that God is on my side. And is he not omniscient, that he should be swayed by the prejudices of men? Does he not read the heart? Is he not master of all causes? And shall I shrink, when I know that I hold his commission? Shall I not regard these anathemas, even as the artillery with which the adversary would drive me from my post? But did the clouds rain fire, and the earth open beneath me, I would not stir; for I know who planted me here; and as long as he wills me to stand, neither men nor devils can move me hence."

"Thou art incorrigible!" cried Beck.

"I would say, firm;" rejoined Arun-

del, overcome with the majesty of virtue; "could I regard, as he does, the cause he has espoused. But, as it is, noble Wallace," continued he, "I must regret your infatuation; and instead of the peace I thought to leave with you, hurl war; never-ending, extirpating war, upon the head of this devoted nation!" As he spoke, he threw his lance (q) against the opposite wall, in which it stuck, and stood shivering; and taking up the casket, and its splendid contents, replaced it in his bosom.

Beck had turned away in wrath from the table; and advancing with a magisterial step to the door, he threw it open, as if he thought that longer to breathe the same air with the person he had excommunicated, would infect him with his own curses. At that instant a group of Scots, who waited in the anti-chamber, hastened forward. At sight of the prelate they raised their bonnets, but hesitated to pass, as he stood, proudly neg-

lectful of their respect, on the threshold. In the next minute Wallace appeared with Lord Arundel.

"Brave knight," said the earl, "the adieus of a man, as sensible of your private worth, as he regrets the errors of your public opinions, abide with you!"

"Were Edward as sensible to virtue, as his brave subjects are," replied the chief, "I should not fear that another drop of blood need be shed in Scotland, to convince him of his present injustice. Farewel, noble earl; the generous candour of yourself, and your brother-in-law, will ever live in the remembrance of William Wallace."

While he yet spoke, a youth broke from the group before them, and rushing towards the Regent, threw himself with a cry of joy at his feet. "My Edwin, my brother!" exclaimed Wallace, and immediately raising him, clasped him in his arms. The throng of Scots, who had accompanied their young leader from Stir-

ling, now crowded about the chief; some kneeling and kissing his garments; and others, ejaculating, with uplifted hands, their thanks at seeing their protector returned in safety, and with redoubled glory.

"You forgive me, my master and friend?" cried Edwin, forgetting, in the happy agitation of his mind, the presence of the English embassadors.

"It was only as a master, I condemned you, my brother!" returned Wallace; "every proof of your affection, must render you dearer to me; and had it been exerted against an offender not so totally in our power, you would not have met my reprimand. But ever remember, that the persons of prisoners are inviolable; for they lie on the bosom of mercy; and who, that has honour, would take them thence."

Lord Arundel, who had lingered to observe this short, but animated scene, now ventured to interrupt it: "May I ask, noble Wallace," said he, "if this interesting

youth be the brave young Ruthven, who distinguished himself at Dumbarton; and who, De Warenne told me, incurred a severe, though just sentence from you, in consequence of his attack upon one, whom, as a soldier, I blush to name."

"It is the same," replied Wallace: "the valour and fidelity of such as he, are as sinews to my arms; and bring a more grateful empire to my heart, than all the crowns which may be in the power of Edward to bestow." "I have often seen the homage of the body," said the earl, "but here I see that of the soul; and were I a king, I should envy Sir William Wallace!"

"You speak, either as a courtier or a traitor!" suddenly exclaimed Beck; and turning with a threatening brow on Lord Arundel; "Beware, earl! for what has now been said, must be repeated to the royal Edward: and he will judge, whether flattery to this proud rebel, be consistent with your allegiance."

"Every word that has been uttered in

this conference, [r] I will myself deliver to King Edward;" replied Lord Arundel; "he shall know the man, on whom he may be forced by justice, to denounce the sentence of rebellion; and, when the puissance of his royal arm lays this kingdom at his feet, the virtues of Sir William Wallace may then find the mercy he now contemns."

Beck did not condescend to listen to the latter part of this explanation; but, proceeding to the court-yard, had mounted his horse before his worthier colleague appeared from the hall. Taking a gracious leave of Sir John Graham, who attended him to the door, the earl exclaimed, "What miracle is before me? Not the mighty mover only, of this wide insurrection, is in the bloom of manhood, but all his generals that I have seen, appear in the very morning of youth! And you conquer our veterans; you make yourselves names which, with us, are only purchased by long experience,

and hairs grown grey in camps and battles!"

"Then by our morning, judge what our day will be;" replied Graham; "and shew your monarch, that as surely as the night of death will in some hour close upon prince and peasant, this land shall never again be over-shadowed by his darkness."

"Listen not to their bold treasons!" cried Beck; and, setting spurs to his horse, in no very clerical style, galloped out of the gates. Arundel made some courteous reply to Graham: and bowing to the rest of the Scottish officers who stood around, turned his steed, and followed by his escort, pursued the steps of the bishop along the snow-covered banks of the Clyde.

When Wallace was left alone with Edwin, the happy youth, (after expressing delight that Murray then held his head-quarters in Bothwell castle) took from his bosom two packets from Lord

Mar and the Countess; and as he put them into the Regent's hand, said, "My dear cousin has sent you many blessings; but I could not persuade her to register even one on paper, while my aunt wrote all this. Almost ever since her own recovery, she has confined herself to my uncle's sick chamber, now totally deserted by the fair Countess, who seems to have forgotten all duties in the adulation of the audience-hall."

Wallace remarked on the indisposition of Mar, and the attention of his daughter, with tenderness. And Edwin, with the unrestrained freedom of happy friendship, proceeded to describe the regal style which the Countess affected, and with what magnificence she welcomed the earls Badenoch and Athol to their native country. "Indeed, my dear lord," continued he, "I cannot guess what vain passion has taken possession of her; but the very day in which I went to Snawdoun to receive her commands for

you, I found her seated on a kind of throne, with ladies standing in her presence, and our younger chieftains thronging the gallery, as if she were the Regent herself. Helen entered for a moment; but she started, (for she had never before witnessed the morning courts of her stepmother,) and retreating, I followed."

But Edwin did not relate to his friend, all that passed in the conference between him and his gentle cousin, in the room whither they retired.

Helen, blushing for her father's wife, would have proceeded immediately to her own apartments, to which she was now, for the first time, allowed to return since the Earl's convalescence; but Edwin drew her into one of Lady Mar's rooms; and seating her beside him, began to speak of his anticipated meeting with Wallace. He held her hand in his: "My dearest cousin," said he, "will not this tender hand, which has suffered so much for our brave friend, write him

one word of kind remembrance? Our queen here, will send him volumes."

"Then he would hardly have time to attend to one of mine;" replied Helen, with a smile: "besides, he requires no new assurances to convince him, that Helen Mar can never cease to remember with the most grateful thoughts, her benefactor."

"And is this all I am to say to him, Helen?"

"All, my Edwin."

"What! not one word of the life you have led since he quitted Stirling? Shall I not tell him, that when this lovely arm no longer wore the livery of its heroism in his behalf, instead of your appearing at the gay assemblies of the Countess; you remained immured within your oratory? Shall I not tell him, that since the sickness of my uncle, you have sat days and nights by his couch-side, listening to the dispatches from the borders; and subscribing with

smiles and tears to his praises of our matchless Regent? Shall I not tell of the sweet maid who lives here the life of a nun for him? Or must I entertain him with the pomps and vanities of my most unsaintly aunt?"

Helen had in vain attempted to stop him, while, with an arch glance at her mantling blushes, he half-whispered these insiduous questions. "Ah, my sweet cousin," said he, "there is something more at the bottom of that beating heart of yours, than you will allow your faithful Edwin to peep into!"

Helen's heart did beat violently both before and after this remark; but conscious, whatever might be there, of the determined purpose of her soul, she turned on him a steady look. "Edwin," said she, "there is nothing in my heart that you may not see. That it reveres Sir William Wallace beyond all other men, I do not deny. But class not my deep veneration, with a sentiment which may

be jested on! He has spoken to me the language of friendship: you know what it is to be his friend: and having tasted of heaven, I cannot stoop to earth. What pleasure can I find in pageants? What interest in the admiration of men? Is not he a brighter object, than I can any where look upon? Is not his esteem of a value, that puts to nought the homages of all else in the world? Do me then justice, my Edwin! Believe me, I am no gloomy, no sighing recluse. I am happy with my thoughts; and thrice happy at the side of my father's couch; for there I meet the image of the most exemplary of human beings; and there I perform the duties of a child to a parent deserving all my love and honour."

"Ah, Helen! Helen!" cried Edwin; "durst I speak the wishes of my heart! But you and Sir William Wallace would frown on me, and I dare not!"

"Then never do!" exclaimed Helen,

turning pale, and trembling from head to foot; too well guessing by the generous glow in his countenance, what would have been that wish.

At this instant the door opened, and Lady Mar appeared. Both rose at her entrance. She bowed her head haughtily to Helen. To Edwin, she graciously extended her hand; "Why, my dear nephew, did you not come into the audience-hall?"

Edwin answered, that as he did not know the governor of Stirling's lady lived in the state of a queen, he hoped he should be excused for mistaking lords and ladies-in-waiting for company; and for that reason, having retired, till he could bid her adieu in a less public scene.

Lady Mar, with increased stateliness, replied; "Perhaps it is necessary to remind you, Edwin, that though Lord Mar's wife, I am a descendant of queens; a princess in my own right; and not only heiress to the sovereignty of the northern

isles, but like Lord Badenoch, of the blood of Scottish kings. Rely on it, I do not degenerate; and that I affect no state to which I may not pretend."

Edwin, to conceal an irrepressible smile, at the absurd pride of his aunt, turned towards the window; but not before the Countess had observed the ridicule which played on his lips. Vexed, but afraid to reprimand one who might so soon resent it, by speaking of her disparagingly to Wallace, she unburthened the swelling of her anger upon the unoffending Helen. Not doubting that she felt as Edwin did, and fancying that she saw the same expression in her countenance; "Lady Helen," cried she, "I request an explanation of that look of derision which I now see on your face. I wish to know, whether the intoxication of your vanity dare impel you to despise claims, which may one day be established to your confusion."

This attack surprised Helen, who, absorbed in other meditations, had hardly

attended to what had passed. "I neither deride you, Lady Mar, nor despise the claims of Lord Badenoch. But since you have condescended to speak to me on the subject, I must, out of respect to yourself, and tenderness for my father, frankly say, that the assumption of honours not legally in your possession, may involve you in ridicule, and pluck danger on your nearest relatives. It is what my father would never approve, were he to know it; and awakening the jealousy of other ladies of the royal houses, is not a probable mode to facilitate the succession of Lord Badenoch."

Lady Mar, provoked at the just reasoning and coolness of this reply; and at being misapprehended with regard to the object with whom she was to share the splendours of a throne; answered rather inconsiderately, "Your father is an old man, and has out-lived every generous feeling. He neither understands my actions, nor shall he controul them." Helen,

struck dumb by this unexpected declaration, suffered her to proceed; "And as to Lord Badenoch giving me the rank to which my birth entitles me, that is a foolish dream—I look to a greater hand."

"What!" inquired Edwin, with an innocent laugh, "does your highness expect my uncle to die, and that Bruce will come hither to lay the crown of Scotland at your feet."

"I expect nothing of Bruce, nor of your uncle;" returned she, with a haughty throw of her head; "but I look for respect from the daughter of Lord Mar, and from the friend of Sir William Wallace."

She rose from her chair, and presenting Edwin with the packet for Wallace, told Helen she might retire to her own room.

"To my father's, I will, madam," returned she.

Lady Mar coloured at this reproof, and turning to Edwin, said, "You know that the dignity of his situation must be main-

tained; and while others attend his couch, I must his reputation."

"I have often heard that *Fame is better than life!*" replied Edwin; "and I thank Lady Mar for shewing me how differently people may translate the same lesson. Adieu, sweet Helen!" said he, bending to kiss her hand. "Farewel," returned she; "may good angels guard you!"

The substance of the latter part of this scene, Edwin did relate to Wallace. He smiled at the vain follies of the Countess, and broke the seal of her letter. It was in the same style with her conversations; at one moment declaring herself his disinterested friend; in the next, uttering wild professions of never-ending attachment. She deplored the sacrifice that had been made of her, when quite a child, to the doting passion of Lord Mar; and complained of his want of sympathy with any of her feelings. Then picturing the happiness which must result from the reciprocal love of congenial hearts, she ven-

tured to shew how truly hers would unite with Wallace's. The conclusion of this strange epistle told him, that the devoted gratitude of all her relations of the house of Cummin, was ready at any moment to relinquish its claims on the crown, to place it on brows so worthy to wear it.

The words of this letter were so artfully, and so persuasively penned, that had not Edwin described the inebriated vanity of Lady Mar, Wallace might have believed that she was ambitious only for him; and that, could she share his heart, his throne would be a secondary object. To establish this deception in his mind, she added—"I live here as at the head of a court, and fools around me think I take pleasure in it:—but did they look into my actions, they would see that I serve while I seem to reign. I am working in the hearts of men, for your advancement."

But whether this were her real motive or not, it was the same to Wallace; he

felt that she would always be, not merely the last object in his thoughts, but one of his aversion. He might have esteemed her as a friend, he abhorred her as a lover; therefore hastily running over her letter, he recurred to a second perusal of Lord Mar's. In this he found satisfactory details of the success of his dispositions. Lord Loch-awe had possessed himself of the western coast of Scotland, from the Mull of Kintyre, to the farthest mountains of Glenmore. There the victorious Lord Ruthven met him; and completed the recovery of the Highlands, by a range of conquests from the Spey to the Murray frith and Inverness-shire. Lord Bothwell, as his brave colleague, brought from the shores of Ross, and the hills of Caithness, every Southron banner which had waved on their embattled towers.

Graham was sent for by Wallace, to hear these pleasant tidings.

"Ah!" cried Edwin, in triumph, "not a spot north of the Forth now re-

mains, that does not acknowledge the supremacy of the Scottish lion!"

"Nor south of it either!" returned Graham: "from the Mull of Galloway, to my gallant father's government on the Tweed; from the Cheviots to the northern ocean, all now is our own. The door is locked against England; and Scotland must prove unfaithful to herself, before the Southrons can again set foot on her borders."

The more private accounts were not less gratifying to Wallace; for he found that his plans for disciplining, and bringing the people into order, were every where adopted; and that in consequence, alarm and penury had given way to peace and abundance. To witness the success of his comprehensive designs; and to settle a dispute between Lord Ruthven and the Earl of Athol, relative to the government of Perth; Lord Mar strongly urged him, (since he had driven the enemy so many hundred miles into their own coun-

try,) to repair immediately to the scene of contest. "Go," added the Earl, "through the Lothians, and across the queen's-ferry, directly into Perthshire. I would not have you come to Stirling, lest it should be supposed that you are influenced in your judgment either by myself or my wife. But I think there cannot be a question that Lord Ruthven's services to the great cause, invest him with a right which his opponent does not possess. Lord Athol has no claim, but that of superior rank. And, I believe, being the near relation of my wife, she is anxious for his elevation. Therefore, come not near us, if you would avoid female importunity."

Wallace now recollected a passage in Lady Mar's letter, which, though not speaking out, insinuated how she should expect he would decide: she said,—"As your interest is mine, my noble friend, all that belongs to me is yours:—my kindred are not withheld, in the gift my devoted

heart bestows on you. Therefore, use them as your own; make them bulwarks around your power, the creatures of your will, the instruments of your benevolence, the defenders or your rights."

Wallace, well pleased to avoid another rencontre with this lady's love and ambition, sent off the substance of these dispatches to Murray; and then taking a tender leave of the venerable Gregory and his family, with Edwin and Sir John Graham set off next morning for the frith of Forth.

CHAP. XIV.

IT was on the eve of St. Thomas, that the boat which contained Wallace, drew near to the coast of Fyfe. A little to the

right, towered the tremendous precipice of Kinghorn.

"Behold, Edwin," said he, "the cause of all our woe! From those horrible rocks fell the best of kings, the good Alexander. My father accompanied him in that fatal ride; and was one of the unhappy group, who had the evil hap, to find his mangled body amongst the rocks below."

"I have heard," observed Graham, "that the sage of Ercildown prophesied that dreadful calamity to Scotland."

"He did prognosticate," replied Wallace, "that on the eighteenth of April a storm should burst over this land, which would lay the country in ruins. Fear seized the farmers: but his prophecy regarded a nobler object than the harvest. The day came, was unclouded, and continued perfectly serene. Lord March, to whom the seer had presaged the event, at noon reproached him with the unlikeliness of its completion. But even at the moment he was ridiculing the sage, an express

on a foaming steed arrived at his gate, to inform him that the King had accidentally fallen from the precipice of Kinghorn, and was slain. *That*, said the Lord of Ercildown, *is the scaithing wind, and dreadful tempest, which shall long blow calamity and trouble on the realm of Scotland!* —And surely his words have been verified; for still the storm rages around our borders; and will not cease, I fear, till the dragon of England be laid low in the blast."(*)

The like discourse held the friends, till landing at Roseyth castle; they lodged there for the night; next morning, at day-break, they recommenced their journey; crossed the Lomonds before sunrise, and entered Perth at noon.

The Regent's arrival, was soon spread throughout the province; and before evening, the hall of the castle was crowded with chieftains, come to pay their respects to their benefactor. An army of

grateful peasantry from the hills filled the courts, begging for one glance only, of their beloved lord. To oblige them, Wallace mounted his horse, and between the lords Ruthven and Athol, with his bonnet off, rode from the castle, to the populace-covered plain which lay to the west of the town. He gratified their affectionate eagerness, by this condescension; and received in return, the sincere homage of a thousand grateful hearts. The snow-topped Grampians echoed with the proud acclamations of *Our deliverer—Our prince —The champion of Scotland—The glorious William Wallace!* and the shores of the Tay resounded with similar rejoicings, at sight of him who had made the Scottish seamen lords of the Northern ocean.

Ruthven beheld this eloquence of nature with sympathetic feelings. His just sense of the unequalled merits of the Regent, had long internally acknowledged him as his sovereign; and he smiled with approbation at every breathing amongst

the people, which intimated what would at last be their general shout. Wallace had proved himself not only a warrior, but a legislator. In the midst of war he had planted the fruits of peace, and now the olive and the vine waved abundant on every hill.

Different were the thoughts of the gloomy Athol as he rode by the side of the Regent. Could he, by a look, have blasted those valiant arms; have palsied that youthful head, whose judgment shamed the hoariest temples, gladly would he have made Scotland the sacrifice; so that he might never again find himself in the triumphant train of one whom he deemed a boy and an upstart! Thus did he muse; and thus did envy open a way into his soul for those demons to enter, which were so soon to possess it with the fellest designs.

The issue of Ruthven's claims, did not lessen Lord Athol's hatred of the Regent. Wallace simply stated the case to him,

only changing the situations of the opponents: he supposed Athol to be in the place of Rüthven; and then asked the frowning earl, if Ruthven had demanded a government which he, Athol, had bravely won and nobly secured, whether he should deem it just to be sentenced to relinquish it into the hands of his rival? By this question he was forced to decide against himself. But while Wallace generously hoped, that by having made him his own judge, he had found an expedient both to soften the pain of disappointment, and to lessen the humiliation of defeat, he had only redoubled the hatred of Athol; who thought he had thus, been cajoled out of even the privilege of complaint. He, however, affected to be reconciled to the issue of the affair; and taking a friendly leave of the Regent, retired to Blair; and there, amongst the numerous fortresses which owned his power, amongst the stupendous strongholds of nature, the cloud-invested moun-

tains, and the labyrinthian winding of his lochs and streams; he determined to pass his days and nights in devising the sure fall of this proud usurper. For so, the bitterness of an envy he durst not yet breathe to any, impelled him internally to designate the unpretending Wallace.

Meanwhile the unconscious object of his hatred, oppressed by the crowds which were constantly assembling in Perth to do him homage, retired to Hunting tower, a castle of Lord Ruthven's, at some distance from the town. Secluded from the throng, he there arranged with the chiefs of several clans, matters of consequence to the internal repose of the country; but receiving applications for similar regulations, from the counties farther north, he decided on going thither himself. Severe as the weather is at that season, he bade adieu to the warm hospitalities of Hunting tower; and, accompanied by Graham and his young friend Edwin, with fifty of his Lanerkers, as a small but faithful

train, he commenced a journey, which he intended should comprehend the circuit of the Highlands.

With the chieftain of almost every castle in his progress, he passed a day; and according to the interest which the situation of the surrounding peasantry created in his mind, he lengthened his sojourn. Every where he was welcomed with enthusiasm; and his glad eye beheld the festivities of Christmas, with a delight which recalled passed emotions till they wrung his heart.

The last day of the old year he spent with Lord Loch-awe in Kilchurn castle.(1) After a bounteous feast, in which lord and vassal joined, the whole family, according to the custom of the country, sat up the night to hail the coming in of the new season. Wallace had passed that hour, twelve months ago, alone with his Marion! They sat together in the window of the western tower of Ellerslie; and while he listened to the cheerful lilts to

which their servants were dancing, the hand of this lovely bride was clasped in his. Marion smiled, and talked of the happiness which should await them in the year to come. "Ay, my beloved," said he, "more than thy beauteous self will then fill these happy arms! Thy babe, my wife, will then hang at thy bosom, to bless with a parent's joys thy grateful husband!"—That time was now come round, and where was Marion?—cold in her grave. Where that smiling babe?—a murderer's steel had reached it ere it saw the light.

Wallace groaned at these recollections: he struck his hand forcibly on his bursting heart, and fled from the room. The noise of the harps, the laughing of the dancers, prevented his emotions from being observed.—And rushing far from the joyous tumult, till the sound died in the breeze, or was only brought to his ear by fitful gusts, he speeded along the margin of the lake, as if he would have also flown

from himself. But memory, racking memory, followed him: throwing himself exhausted on a bank, over which the ice hung in pointed masses, he felt not the roughness of the ground, for all within him was disturbed and at war.

"Why," cried he, "O! why was I selected for this cruel sacrifice? Why was this heart, to whom the acclaim of multitudes, could bring no selfish joy; why was it to be bereft of all that ever made it beat with transport? Companion of my days, partner of my soul! my lost, lost Marion! and are thine eyes for ever closed on me? shall I never more clasp that hand, which ever thrilled my frame with every sense of rapture?—Gone, gone for ever, and I am alone!"

Long and agonizing was the pause which succeeded to this fearful tempest of feeling. In that hour of grief, renewed in all its former violence, he forgot country, friends, and all on earth. The recollection of his fame, was mockery to

him; for where was she to whom the sound of his praises would have given such joy?

"Ah!" said he, "it was indeed happiness to be brightened in those eyes!—When the gratitude of our poor retainers met thine ear, how didst thou lay thy soft cheek to mine, and shoot its gentle warmth into my heart!" At that moment he turned his face on the gelid bank:—starting with wild horror, he exclaimed, "Is it now so cold?—My Marion, my murdered wife!" and rushing from the spot, he again hastened along the margin of the loch. But there he still heard the distant sound of the pipes from the castle: he could not bear their gay notes; and darting up the hill which overhung Loch-awe's domains, ascended with swift and reckless steps the rocky sides of Ben Cruachan. Full of distracting thoughts, and impelled by a wild despair, he hurried from steep to steep; and rapidly descending the western side of the moun-

tain, regardless of the piercing sleet, was flying forward, when his course was suddenly checked, by coming in violent contact with another human being, who, running as hastily through the storm, drove impetuously against Wallace; but being the weaker of the two, fell to the ground. The accident rallied the scattered senses of the chief. He now felt that he was out in the midst of a furious winter tempest; had wandered, he knew not whither: and probably, had materially injured some poor traveller by his intemperate motion.

He raised the fallen man, and asked whether he were hurt. The traveller, perceiving by the kind tone of the inquirer, that no harm had been intended, answered, "Not much; only a little lamed; and all the recompense I ask of you, for this unlucky upset, is to give me a helping hand to my father's cot, which is just by. I have been out at a neighbour's to dance in the new-year with a

bonnie lass, who may be my wife before this day twelve months."

As the honest lad went on telling his tale, with a great many particulars dear to his simple wishes, Wallace helped him along; and carefully conducting him, through the gathering snow, descended the declivity which led to the shepherd's cottage. When within a few yards of it, Wallace heard the sound of singing: but it was not the gay carolling of mirth: the solemn chant of more serious music mingled with the roaring blast.

"I am not too late yet!" cried the communicative lad; "I should not have run so fast, had I not wanted to have got home time enough to make one in the new-year's hymn."

They had now arrived at the little door; and the youth, without the ceremony of knocking, opened the latch: as he did it, he turned and said to his companion, "We have no occasion for bolts, since the brave Lord Wallace has cleared

the country of our Southron robbers." He pushed the door as he spoke, and displayed to the eyes of the chief, a venerable old man on his knees before a table, on which stood a crucifix; around him, knelt a family of young people, and an aged dame, all joining in the sacred thanksgiving. The youth, without a word, dropped on his knees near the door; and making a sign to his companion to do the same, Wallace complied; and as the anthems rose in succession on his ear, to which the low breathings of the lightly-touched harp echoed its heavenly strains, he felt the tumult of his bosom gradually subside; and when the venerable sire laid down the instrument, and clasped his hands in prayer, the natural pathos of his invocations, and the grateful devotion with which the young people gave their response, all tended to tranquillize his mind into a holy calm.

At the termination of the concluding prayer, how sweet were the emotions of

Wallace, when he heard these words, uttered with augmented fervour by the aged petitioner!

"While we thus thank thee, O gracious God! for thy mercies bestowed upon us, we humbly implore thee to hold in thine almighty protection him by whose arm thou has wrought the deliverance of Scotland. Let our preserver be saved from his sins by the blood of Christ! Let our benefactor be blest in mind, body, and estate, and all prosper with him that he takes in hand! May the good he has dispensed to his country, be returned four-fold into his bosom;—and may he live to see a race of his own, reaping the harvest of his virtues, and adding fresh honours to the already glorious name of Wallace!"

Every mouth echoed a fervent amen to this prayer; and Wallace himself, inwardly breathed, "And have I not even now sinned, All-gracious God! in the distraction of this night's remembrance?

I mourned, I would not be comforted. But in thy mercy, thou hast led me hither to see the happy fruits of my labours, and I am resigned and thankful!"

The sacred rites over, two girls ran to the other side of the room, and between them brought forward a rough table covered with dishes and bread; while the mother, taking off a large pot, emptied its smoking contents into the different vessels. Meanwhile, the young man introducing the stranger to his father, related the accident of the meeting; and the good old shepherd bidding him a hearty welcome, desired him to draw near the fire, and partake of their new-year's breakfast.

"We need the fire, I assure you," cried the lad, "for we are dripping."

Wallace now advanced from the shadowed part of the room where he had knelt, and drawing towards the light, certainly displayed to his host the truth of his son's observation. Wallace had left the castle without his bonnet; and hurrying

on, regardless of the whelming storm, his hair was saturated with wet, and now streamed in water over his shoulders. The good old wife, seeing that the stranger's situation was even worse than her son's, snatched from him the bottle, out of which he was swallowing a hearty cordial, and poured it over the exposed head of her guest; then ordering one of her daughters to rub it dry, she took off his plaid, and wringing it, hung it to the fire.

During these various operations; for the whole family seemed eager to shew their hospitality; the old man discovered, not so much by the costliness of the materials of his garments, as by the noble mien and gentle manners of the stranger, that he was some chieftain from the castle. "Your honour," said he, "must pardon the uncourtliness of our ways: but we give you the best we have; and the worthy Lord Loch-awe cannot do more."

Wallace gave smiling answers to all their remarks and offers of service. He partook of their broth, praised the good wife's cakes, and sat discoursing with the family with all the gaiety and frankness of one of themselves. His unreserved manners opened every heart around him: and, with the most confidential freedom, the venerable shepherd related his domestic history; dwelling particularly on the projected marriages of his children, which he said "should now take place, since the good Sir William Wallace had brought peace to the land."

Wallace gratified the worthy father, by appearing to take an interest in all his narratives: and then allowing the happy spirits of the young people to break in upon these graver discussions, he smiled with them; or looked serious with the garrulous matron, who turned the discourse to tales of other times. He listened with complacency to every legend of witch, fairy, and ghost; and his enlight-

ened remarks, sometimes pointed out natural causes for the extraordinary appearances she described; or, at better attested and less equivocal accounts of supernatural apparitions, he acknowledged, that there are *more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in philosophy.*

Morning dawned before the tranquillized, nay, happy Wallace,—happy in the cheerful innocence of the scene, discovered that the night was past. As the grey light gleamed through the wooden shutter, Wallace rose. "My friends, I must leave you;" said he: "there are those not far off, who may be alarmed at my disappearance: for none knew when I walked abroad; and unwittingly I have been charmed all these hours to remain, enjoying the happiness of your circle, forgetful of the anxiety I have perhaps occasioned in my own.

The old man declared his intention of seeing him over the hill. Wallace de-

clined giving him that trouble; saying, that as it was day-light, and the snow had ceased, he could easily retrace his steps to the castle.

"No, no;" returned the shepherd; "and besides," said he, "as I hear the good Lord Regent is keeping the new-year with our noble earl, who knows but I may get a glimpse of his noble countenance; and that will be a sight to tell of till I die!"

"God's blessing on his sweet face!" cried the old woman; "but I would give all the yarn in my muckle chest, to catch one look of his lucky eye! I warrant you, witch nor fairy could never have power to harm me more."

"Ah, father," cried the eldest of the girls, blushing; "if you go near enough to him! Do you know Madgie Grant told me, that if I could but get even the least bit of Sir William Wallace's hair; and give it to Donald Cameron to wear

in a true-lover's knot on his breast, no Southron will be able to do him harm as long as he lives !"

" And do you believe that this would protect your lover, my pretty Jeannie ?" inquired Wallace, with a sweet smile.

" Surely," she replied, " for Madgie is a wise woman, and has the second sight."

" Well then," returned he, " you shall be gratified. For though I must for once contradict the testimony of a wise woman, and tell you, that nothing can render a man absolutely safe, but the protection of Heaven, yet, if a hair from the head of Sir William Wallace would please you ;—and a glance from his eye gratify your mother ;—both shall be satisfied." And lifting up the old woman's sheers, which lay on a working stool before him, he cut off a golden lock from the middle of his head, and put it into the hand of Jeannie. At this action, which was performed with such a noble grace, that not one of the family now doubted who had been their

guest, the good dame fell on her knees; and Jeannie, with a cry of joy, putting the beautiful lock into her bosom, followed her example; and in a moment all were clinging around him. The old man grasped his hand. "Bravest of men!" cried he, "the Lord has indeed blest this house, since he has honoured it with the presence of the deliverer of Scotland! My prayers, and the benedictions of all good men, friend or foe, must ever follow your footsteps!"

Tears of pleasure started into the eyes of Wallace. He raised the family one by one from the ground, and putting his purse into the hand of the dame, "There, my kind hostess," said he, "let that fill the chests of your daughters on their bridal day; they must receive it as a brother's portion to his sisters; for, it is with fraternal affection that William Wallace regards the sons and daughters of Scotland."

The happy sobs of the old woman

stopped the expressions of her gratitude: but her son, fearing his freedom of the night before might have offended, stood abashed at a distance. Wallace stretched out his hand to him: "My good Archibald," cried he, "hesitate not to approach one who will always be your friend. I shall send from the castle this day, sufficient to fill your bridal coffers also."

Archibald now petitioned to be allowed to follow him in his army.—"No, my brave youth," replied the chief, "remain where you are, to defend the spot, should need be, where you were born. Lord Loch-awe will lead you forth, whenever there is occasion; and, meanwhile, your duty is to imitate the domestic duties of your worthy father. Make the neighbouring valley smile with the fruits of your industry; and raise a family to bless you, as you now bless him."

Wallace, having wrapped himself in his plaid, now withdrew amidst the benedictions of the whole group; and swiftly

re-crossing the mountain heights, was soon on the western brow of Ben Cruachan; and in ten minutes afterwards, entered the hall of Kilchurn castle. A few servants, only, remained; all the rest of the family were gone to rest. The earl and Graham, about an hour after their friend's departure, had missed him; but supposing that whithersoever he was gone, he would soon return, they made no inquiries; and when the tempest began, on Edwin expressing his anxiety to know where he was, one of the servants said that he was gone to his chamber.—This answer satisfied every one; and they continued to enjoy the festal scene, until the Countess of Loch-awe made the signal for repose.

Next morning, when the family met at the breakfast-board, they were not a little surprised to hear Wallace recount the adventure of the night; and while Loch-awe promised every kindness to the shepherd, and a messenger was dispatched with a purse to Archibald, Edwin learnt of the

earl's servant, that his reason for supposing the Regent was gone to his room, arose from the sight of his bonnet in the outer hall. Wallace was glad that such an evidence, had prevented his friends being alarmed; and retiring with Lord Loch-awe, with his usual equanimity of mind, resumed the graver errand of his tour.

The hospitable rites of the season being over, in the course of a few days the earl accompanied his illustrious guest to make the circuit of Argyleshire. At Castle-Urqhardt they parted; and Wallace proceeding with Edwin and Graham and his faithful Lanerkers, performed his legislative visits from sea to sea. Having traversed, with perfect satisfaction, the whole of the northern parts of the kingdom, he returned to Hunting tower([u]) on the very morning that a messenger had reached it from Murray. That vigilant chieftain informed the Regent of King Edward's arrival

from Flanders, and that he was preparing a large army to march into Scotland.

"We must meet him," cried Wallace, "on his own shores; and let the horrors attending the seat of war, fall on the country whose king would bring desolation to ours."

CHAP. XV.

WALLACE sent messengers to the different chieftains in the Highlands, and to Stirling, to order a certain number of men to meet him in the vales of Clydesdale on a certain day. He then proceeded to the coast of Fyfe, and stopping at Kinclavin castle, to lodge for the night, he there was surprised with another embassy from Edward; a herald, accompanied by that Sir Hugh le de Spencer, who had

conducted himself so insolently on his first embassage.

On his entering the chamber where the Regent sat surrounded by the chieftains who had accompanied him from Perthshire, Le de Spencer walked forward; and before the herald had paid the customary respects, the young Englishman advanced to Wallace, and in the pride of a little mind, elated at being empowered to insult with impunity, he broke forth: "Sir William Wallace, the contumèly with which the embassadors of Prince Edward were treated, is so resented by the King of England, that he invests his own majesty in my person, to tell you, that your treasons have filled up their measure; and that now, in the plenitude of his continental victories, he descends upon Scotland, to annihilate this rebellious nation, and——"

"Stop, Sir Hugh le de Spencer;" cried the herald, touching him with his sceptre; "whatever may be the denunciations

with which the King has intrusted you, you must allow me to perform my duty before you declare them ?—And thus I utter the gracious message which his Majesty has put into my mouth."

He then addressed Wallace: and in the King's name, accusing him of rebellion; and of unfair, and cruel devastations made in Scotland, and in England, by himself and his followers; promised him pardon for all, if he would immediately disband his followers, and acknowledge his offence.

Wallace motioned with his hand for his friends to keep silence, (for he perceived that two or three of the most violent, were ready to break forth in fierce defiance of King Edward,) and being obeyed, he calmly replied to the herald: "When we were desolate, your King came to us as a comforter, and he put us in chains! While he was absent, I invaded his country as an open enemy. I rifled your barns; but it was to feed a people whom

his robberies had left to perish! I marched through your lands, I made your soldiers fly before me; but what spot in all your shores, have I made black with the smoke of ruin? I leave the people of Northumberland to judge between me and your monarch. And that he never shall be mine, or Scotland's, our deeds shall further prove!"

"Vain and ruinous determination!" exclaimed Le de Spencer: "King Edward comes against you with an army that will reach from sea to sea. Wherever the hoofs of his war-horse strike, there grass never grows again. The sword and the fire shall make a desert of this devoted land; and your arrogant head, proud Scot, shall bleed upon the scaffold!"

"He shall first see my fires, and meet my sword, in his own fields;" returned Wallace; "and if God continue my life, I will keep my Easter in England, in de-

spite of King Edward and of all who bear armour in his country!"

As he spoke he rose from his chair, and bowing his head to the herald, the Scottish marshals conducted the embassadors from his presence. Le de Spencer twice attempted to speak, but the marshals would not allow him; they said that the business of the embassy was now over, and that should he presume further to insult their Regent, the privilege of his official character should not protect him from the wrath of the Scots. Intimidated by the frowning brows and nervous arms of all around, he held his peace, and the doors were shut on him.

Wallace foresaw a heavy tempest to Scotland, threatened by these repeated embassies; for he perceived, that Edward, by sending overtures, which he knew could not be accepted; by making a shew of pacific intentions; meant to throw the blame of the continuation of hostilities

upon the Scots; and so overcome the reluctance of his more just nobility, to further persecute a people, whom he had made suffer so much; and likewise to change the aspect of the Scottish cause in the eyes of Philip of France, (who had lately sent congratulations to the Regent on the victory of Cambus-Kenneth;) and by that means, deprive him of a powerful ally and zealous negociator for an honourable peace.

To prevent this last injury, Wallace dispatched a quick-sailing vessel with Sir Alexander Ramsay, to inform King Philip of the particulars of Edward's proposals, and of the consequent continued warfare.

On the twenty-eighth of February, Sir William Wallace joined Lord Andrew Murray on Bothwell moor; and had the happiness of seeing his brave friend again lord of the domains which he had so lately lost for him. He did not visit the castle. At such a crisis, he forbore to

unnerve his mind by awakening the griefs which lay slumbering at the bottom of his heart. Halbert came from his convent, once more to look upon the face of his beloved master. The meeting cost Wallace many agonizing sighs; but he smiled on his faithful servant. He pressed the venerable form in his youthful arms, and promised him news of his life and safety. "May I die," cried the old man, "ere I hear it is otherwise! But youth is no warrant for life; the vigour of these arms cannot always assure themselves of victory; and then, should you fall, where is our country?" "In better than mine;" returned the chief; "in the arms of God. He will fight for Scotland when Wallace is laid low." Halbert wept. But the trumpet sounded for the field. He blessed his lord, and they parted for ever.

A strong force from the Highlands, joined the troops from Stirling; and Wallace had the satisfaction of seeing

before him thirty thousand well-appointed men, all eager for the fight. With all Scotland pressing on his heart, his eye lingered a moment on the distant towers of Bothwell; but not delaying a moment, he placed himself at the head of his legions, and set forth through a country, now budding with all the charms of the cultivation he had spread over it. He had hardly commenced his march, when a courier from Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, met him with the information that the Northumbrians, being apprized of King Edward's approach, had assembled in immense bodies, and having crossed the Debateable land in the night, had driven Sir Eustace Maxwell with great loss, into Carlaveroch; had taken several minor forts; and though harassed by Kirkpatrick, were ravaging the country as far as Dumfries. The letter of the brave knight added, "these Southron thieves blow the name of Edward before them, and with its sound have spell-bound the courage of

every soul I meet. Come then, valiant Wallace, and conjure it down again; else, I shall not be surprised if the men of Annandale bind me hand and foot, and deliver me up to Algernon Percy (the commander of this inroad,) to purchase mercy to their cowardice."

Wallace made no reply to this message, but proclaiming to his men that the enemy was in Dumfries-shire, every foot was put to the speed, and in a short time they arrived on the ridgy summits of the eastern mountains of Clydesdale. His troops halted for rest near the village of Biggar; and it being night, he ascended to the top of the highest craig, and lit a fire, whose far-streaming light he hoped would send the news of his approach to Annandale. The air being calm and clear, the signal rose in such a long pyramid of flame, that distant shouts of rejoicing were heard breaking the deep silence of the hour. A moment after, a hundred answering beacons burnt along the horizon.

Torthorald saw the propitious blaze; he shewed it to his terrified followers;—"Behold that *hill of fire!*" cried he, "and cease to despair." "Wallace comes!" was their response; "and we no more fear."(x)

Day broke upon Wallace, as he crossed the heights of Drumlanrig; and pouring his thousands over the almost deserted vallies of Annandale, like a torrent he swept the invaders back upon their steps: he took young Percy prisoner; and leaving him shut up in Lochmaben, drove his flying vassals far beyond the Cheviots.

Annandale again free, he went into its various quarters; and summoning the people, (who now crept from their caves and woods, to shelter under his shield) he reproved them for their cowardice; and shewed them, that unless every man possess a courage equal to his general, he must expect to fall again under the yoke of the enemy. "Faith in a leader, is

good;" said he; "but not such a faith as leaves him to act, without yourselves rendering that assistance to your own preservation, which Heaven itself commands. I am but the head of the battle, you are the arms: if you shrink, I fall, and the cause is ruined. When absent from you in person, I left my guiding mind with you: I gave the knights of Carlaveroch and Torthorald, directions how to repel the foe; and yet you fled. Had I been here, and you done the same, the like must have been the consequence. What think you is in my arm, that I should alone stem your enemies? The expectation is extravagant and false. You follow my call to battle, you fight valiantly, and I win the day. Respect, then, yourselves; and believe, that you are the sinews, the nerves, the strength of Sir William Wallace! Dishonour not your fathers, and your trust in God, by flying from your post; be confident that while the standard of li-

berty is before you, you fight under his banner. See how I, in that faith, drove these conquering Northumbrians before me like frighted roes! You might, and must do the same, or the sword of Wallace is drawn in vain. Partake my spirit, brethren of Annandale, fight as stoutly over my grave as by my side, or before the year expires, you will again be the slaves of Edward."

Such language, while it covered the cheeks of the Annandalers with shame, awoke emulation in every heart, to efface with honourable deeds the memory of their disgrace. With augmented forces he therefore marched into Cumberland; and having drawn up his array between a river, and a high ground which he covered with archers, he stood prepared to meet the approach of King Edward. But Edward did not appear till late in the next day; and then the Scots descried his legions advancing from the horizon, to pitch their vanguard on the

plain of Stanmore. The aim of Wallace was to draw the King towards the Scottish lines, where at certain distances, he had dug deep pits; and covering them lightly with twigs and loose grass, had left them as traps for the Southron cavalry; for in cavalry, he was told by his spies, would consist the chief strength of Edward's army. The waste in which Wallace had laid the adjoining counties, rendered the provisioning of so large a host very difficult; and as it was composed of a mixed multitude from every land on which the King of England had set his invading foot, harmony could not be expected to continue amongst its leaders. Delay was therefore an advantage to the Scottish Regent; and observing that his enemy held back, as if he wished to draw him from his position, he determined not to stir, although he might seem to be struck with awe of so great an adversary.

To this end he offered him peace; hop-

ing, either to obtain what he asked, (which he did not deem very probable) or by filling Edward with an idea of his fear, urge him to precipitate himself forward, to avoid the dangers of a prolonged sojourn in so barren a country, and to take Wallace, as he might think, in his panic. Instructing his heralds what to say, he sent them on to Roy cross,[y] near which the tent of the King of England was pitched. Edward, supposing that his enemy was now at his feet, and ready to beg the terms he had before rejected, admitted the embassadors, and bade them deliver their message. Without farther parley the herald spoke.

"Thus saith Sir William Wallace: were it not that the kings and nobles of the realm of Scotland, have ever sought redress of injuries, before they sought revenge, you, King of England and invader of our country! should not now behold orators in your camp, persuading concord, but a mighty army in battle ar-

ray advancing to the onset. Our Lord Regent being of the ancient opinion of his renowned predecessors, that the greatest victories are never of such advantage to a conqueror, as an honourable and bloodless peace; sends to offer this peace to you, at the price of restitution. The lives you have rifled from us, you cannot restore; but the noble Lord Douglas, whom you now unjustly detain a prisoner, we demand; and that you retract those claims on our monarchy, which never had existence, till ambition begot them on the basest treachery. Grant these just requisitions, and we lay down our arms; but continue to deny them, and our nation is ready to rise to a man, and with heart and hand avenge the injuries we have sustained. You have wasted our lands, burnt our towns, and imprisoned our nobility. Without consideration of age or condition, women, children, and feeble old men, have, unresisting, fallen by your sword. And

why was all this? Did our confidence in your honour offend you, that you put our chieftains in durance, and deprived our yeomanry of their lives? Did the benedictions with which our prelates hailed you as the arbitrator between our princes, raise your ire, that you burnt their churches, and slew them on the altars?—These, O! King, were thy deeds: and for these, William Wallace is in arms. But yield us the peace we ask; withdraw from our quarters; relinquish your unjust pretensions; and we will once more consider Edward of England as the kinsman of Alexander the Third; and his subjects, as the friends and allies of our realm."

Edward, not in the least moved with this speech, turned towards his kinsman Frere Briangy, and giving him a glance, which spoke the contempt in which he held the embassy; coolly answered, "Your leader, intoxicated by a transitory success, is vain enough to suppose that he can discomfit

the King of England, as he has done his unworthy officers, by fierce and insolent words; but we are not so weak as to be overthrown by a breath, nor so base as to bear argument from a rebel. I come to claim my own; to assert my supremacy over Scotland:—and it shall acknowledge its liege lord, or be left a desert without a living creature to say *this was a kingdom.* Depart, this is my answer to you: your leader shall receive his at the point of my lance."

Wallace, who did not expect a more temperate reply, ere his embassadors returned, had arranged his men for the onset. Lord Bothwell, and Murray his valiant son, took the lead on the left wing; Sir Eustace Maxwell and Kirkpatrick commanded on the right.—Graham held the reserve behind the woods; and the Regent himself, with Edwin and his brave standard-bearer, occupied the centre. Having heard the report of his messengers, he repeated to his troops the

answer they brought: and while he stood at the head of the lines, he exhorted them to remember, that on that day the eyes of all Scotland would be upon them. They were the first of their country, who had gone forth to meet the tyrant in a pitched battle; and in proportion to the danger they confronted, would be their meed of glory. "But it is not for renown merely, that you are called upon to fight this day," said he; "your rights, your homes are at stake. You have no hope of security for your lives, but in an unswerving determination to keep the field; and let the world see, how much more might lies in the arms of a few, contending for their country and hereditary liberties; than in hosts, which seek for blood and spoil. Slavery and freedom lie before you! Shrink but one backward step, and yourselves are in bondage, your wives become the prey of violence. Be firm: trust Him who blesses the righteous cause, and victory will crown your toil!"

Edward, though affecting to despise his young opponent, was too good a general, really to contemn any enemy who had so often proved himself worthy of respect; and, therefore, when he placed himself in the van of his numerous army, he did not fail to set before them, not only the spoil they should gain on the first defeat of the Scots, but also the property they might acquire by the sequestration of the country. By declaring it his determination to put all the Scottish chieftains to death, and to transfer their estates to his conquering officers, he stimulated their avarice as well as love of fame; and with every passion in arms, they rushed to the combat.

Wallace stood unmoved.—Not a bow was drawn till the impetuous squadrons, in full charge towards the flanks of the Scots, fell into the pits: then it was that the Highland archers on the hill launched their arrows: the plunging horses were instantly overwhelmed by others, who, in

their career, could not be checked, but were precipitated over their companions. New showers of darts rained upon them; and sticking into their flesh, made them rear, and roll upon their riders; while others, who were wounded, but had escaped the pits, flew back in rage of pain, upon the advancing infantry. A confusion ensued, so perilous, that the King thought it necessary to precipitate himself forward, and in person attack the main body of his adversary, which yet stood inactive. Giving the spur to his charger, he ordered his troops to press on over the struggling heaps before them; and being obeyed, with much difficulty and great loss, he passed the first range of pits; but a second and a wider awaited him; and there, seeing his men sink into them by squadrons, he beheld the whole army of Wallace close in upon them. Terrific was now the havoc.—The very numbers of the Southrons, and the mixed discipline of their army, proved its bane.

In the tumult, they hardly understood the orders which were given; and some mistaking them, acted so entirely contrary to the movements intended, that Edward, galloping from one end of the field to the other, (while his officers trembled at every step he took, for fear that some of the secret pits should engulph him,) appeared like a frantic man, regardless of every personal danger, so that he could but fix others to front the same tempest of death with himself. But at this juncture, when, making a desperate attempt to recover the day, he rallied part of his distracted army, and drove it with all its force against the centre of the Scots; the reserve under Graham charged him in the rear; and the archers redoubling their discharge of artillery, the Flanderkins, who were in the van of Edward, suddenly giving way with cries of terror, the amazed King found himself obliged to retreat, or to run the risk of being taken. He gave a signal; the first of the kind, he had ever sounded

in his life; and drawing his English troops around him, fell back in tolerable order beyond the confines of his camp.

The Scots were eager to pursue him, but Wallace checked the motion: "Let us not hunt the lion till he stand at bay;" cried he. "He will retire far enough from the Scottish borders, without our leaving this vantage ground to drive him."

What Wallace said, came to pass. Soon, no vestige of a Southron soldier, but the dead which strewed the road, was to be seen from side to side of the wide horizon. The royal camp was immediately seized by the triumphant Scots, and amidst the variety of its spoil, the tent of King Edward, and its costly furniture, was brought away, and that day sent to Stirling as a trophy of the victory.

CHAP. XVI.

MOST of the chieftains from the north, had drawn to Stirling to be near intelligence from the borders. They were aware, that this meeting between Wallace and Edward, was the crisis of their fate. The few who remained in the citadel, of those who had borne the brunt of the opening of this glorious revolution for their country, were full of sanguine expectations. They had seen the prowess of their leader, they had shared the glory of his destiny, and they feared not that Edward would deprive him of one ray. But they who, at the utmost wilds of the Highlands, had only heard his fame; though they had afterwards seen him amongst themselves, transforming the mountain savage into a civilized man

and disciplined soldier; though they had felt the effects of his military successes; yet they doubted how his fortunes might stand the shock of Edward's happy star. The lords whom he had released from the Southron prisons, were all of the same dismayed opinion; for they knew what numbers Edward could bring against the Scottish power, and how hitherto unrivalled was his skill in the field. "Now," thought Lord Badenoch, "will this brave Scot, find the difference between fighting with the officers of a king; and a king himself, contending for what he determines shall be a part of his dominions!" Full of this idea, and resolving never to fall into the hands of Edward again, (for the conduct of Wallace, had made the earl ashamed of his long submission to the usurpation of rights to which he had a claim;) he kept a vessel in readiness at the mouth of the Forth, to take him, as soon as the news of the Regent's defeat

should arrive, far from the sad consequences, to the quiet asylum of France.

The meditations of Athol, Buchan, and March, were of a different tendency. It was their design, on the earliest intimation of such intelligence, to set forth, and be the first to throw themselves at the feet of Edward, and acknowledge him their sovereign. Thus, with various projects in their heads, (which none but the three last, breathed to each other,) were several hundred chieftains assembled around the Earl of Mar at the moment when Edwin Ruthven, glowing with all the effulgence of his general's glory and his own, rushed into the hall, and throwing the royal standard of England on the ground, exclaimed, "There lies the supremacy of King Edward!"

Every man started on his feet. "You do not mean," cried Athol, "that King Edward has been beaten?" "He has been beaten, and driven off the field!"

returned Edwin. "These dispatches," added he, laying them on the table before his uncle; "will relate every particular. A hard battle our Regent fought, for our enemies were numberless; but a thousand good angels were his allies; and Edward himself fled. I saw the King, after he had thrice rallied his troops, and brought them to the charge, at last turn and fly. It was at that moment, I wounded his standard-bearer, and seized this dragon."

"Thou art worthy of thy general, brave Ruthven;" said Badenoch to Edwin; "by the calling forth of such spirits, I augur that great things are intended by Heaven for this nation!" "James," added he, addressing his eldest son, who had just arrived from France, "you must equal this boy in warlike deeds, or you will disgrace your royal blood."

The younger chieftains crowded forward to congratulate Edwin, and to ask

him many questions. Lord Mar, who had stood in speechless gratitude, opened the dispatches; and finding a circumstantial narrative of the battle, with accounts of the previous embassies, he read them aloud. Their contents excited a variety of emotions. When the nobles heard that Edward had offered Wallace the crown; when they found that he had, by vanquishing that powerful monarch, subdued even the soul of the man who had hitherto held them all in awe; though in the same breath they read that their Regent had refused royalty, and was now, as a servant of the people, preparing to strengthen the borders; yet, the most extravagant suspicions awoke in almost every breast. The eagle flight of his glory, seemed to have raised him so far above their heads, so beyond their power to restrain or to elevate him, that an envy, dark as Erebus; a jealousy, which at once annihilated every grateful sentiment, every personal regard, passed like

electricity from heart to heart. The eye, turning from one to the other, explained what no lip dared yet to utter. A dead silence reigned, while the demon of hatred was taking possession of every breast; and none but the lords Mar, Badenoch, and Loch-awe, escaped the black contagion.

When the meeting broke up, Lord Mar placed himself at the head of the officers of the garrison, and with a herald holding the banner of Edward beneath the colours of Scotland, rode forth to proclaim to the country the decisive victory of its Regent. Badenoch and Loch-awe left the hall, to hasten with the tidings to Snawdoun. The rest of the chiefs dispersed. But, as if actuated by one spirit, in the out-skirts of the town, they soon drew together in groups; and whispered among themselves these, and similar sentiments: "He refused the crown offered to him in the field by the people; he rejected it from Edward; because he

would reign uncontrolled. He will now seize it as a conqueror, and we shall have an upstart's foot upon our necks. If we are to be slaves, let us have a tyrant of our own chusing.

As the trumpets before Lord Mar blew the loud acclaim of triumph, Athol said to Buchan, "Cousin, that is but the forerunner of what we shall hear to announce the usurpation of this Wallace. And shall we sit tamely by, and have our birthright wrested from us by a man of yesterday?—No, if the race of Alexander be not to occupy the throne, let us not hesitate between the monarch of a mighty nation and a low-born tyrant; between him, who will at least gild our chains with chivalric honours, and the upstart, whose domination will be as severe as debasing!"

Murmurings, such as these, went from chief to chief; and descended to the minor barons, who held lands in fee of these more sovereign lords. Petty interests

extinguished gratitude for general benefits; and by secret meetings, at the heads of which were Athol, Buchan, and March, a conspiracy was soon formed to overset the power of Wallace. Their design was to invite Edward once more to take possession of the kingdom; and to accomplish this with certainty, they determined to affect a warm zeal for the Regent; and March, as a proof of his, was to ask Wallace to send him to Dunbar, as governor of the Lothians, and to hold the ever refractory Soulis in check. He was to offer his service as an alleviation to the cares of Lord Dundaff who held Berwick, and who must find that place a sufficient charge for his age and comparative inactivity; "Then," cried the false Cospatrick([z]) "when I am fixed at Dunbar Edward may come round from Newcastle to that port; and by my management he shall march unmolested to Stirling, and may seize the usurper on his throne."

This suggestion met with full approval

from these dark incendiaries; and as their meetings were usually held at night, they walked forth in the day with cheerful countenances, and joined the general rejoicing. They feared to hint, even a word of their intentions to Lord Badenoch; for, on Buchan having expressed to him some discontent at such homage being paid to a man so much their inferior, his answer was; "Had we acted worthy of our birth, Sir William Wallace never could have had the opportunity to rise upon our disgrace. But, as it is, we must submit, or bow to treachery instead of virtue." This reply determined them to keep their proceedings secret from him; and also from Lady Mar; for both Lord Buchan and Lord Athol, had, at different times, listened to the fond dreams of her love and ambition. They had flattered her with entering into her designs: Athol, gloomily affected acquiescence, that he might render himself master of all that was in her mind, and

perhaps in that of her lover; for he did not doubt that Wallace was as guilty as her wishes would have made him: and Buchan, ever ready to yield to the persuasions of woman, was not likely to refuse, when his fair cousin promised to reward him with all the pleasures of the gayest court in Europe.

Thus were they situated, when the news of Wallace's decisive victory, distancing all their means to raise him, who was now at the pinnacle of power, determined the dubious, to be at once his mortal enemies.

Lord Badenoch had listened with a different temper, to the first breathings of Lady Mar on her favourite subject. He told her, if the nation chose to make their benefactor king, he should not oppose it; because he thought that ncne of the blood-royal deserved to wear the crown, which they had all consented to hold in fee of Edward. But, that he would never promote by intrigue, an election, which

would rob his own posterity of their inheritance. And to the hints she gave of her being one day the wife of Wallace, he turned on her with a frown, and said, "Cousin, beware how you allow so guilty an idea to take possession of your heart! It is the parent of dishonour and death. And did I think that Sir William Wallace were capable of sharing your wishes, I would be the first to abandon his standard. But I believe him too virtuous to look on a married woman with the eyes of passion; and that he holds the houses of Mar and Cummin in too high a respect, to breathe an illicit sigh in the ear of my kinswoman."

Lady Mar, seeing that she could not make the impression she desired on the mind of this severe relative, spoke to him no more on the subject. And Lord Badenoch, ignorant that she had imparted her criminal project to his brother and cousin, from this silence, believed that his reproof had performed her cure; and

therefore, made no hesitation to be the first who should go to Snawdoun, to communicate to her the brilliant dispatches of the Regent; and to declare the freedom of Scotland to be now almost absolutely secured. He and Lord Loch-awe, joined by Edwin, in a few minutes arrived at the palace. The moment the Countess heard the name of her nephew announced, she made a sign for her ladies to withdraw; and starting forward at his entrance, "Speak!" cried she, "tell me, Edwin, is the Regent still a conqueror?" "Where are my mother and Helen," replied he, "to share my tidings?" "Then they are good!" exclaimed Lady Mar, with one of her most bewitching smiles, and patting him on the head, "Ah! you sly one, like your chief, you know your power!" "And like him I exercise it;" replied he, gaily; "therefore, to keep your ladyship no longer in suspense, here is a letter from the Regent himself." He presented it as

he spoke, and she, catching it from him, turned round, and pressing it rapturously to her lips (it being the first she had received from him) eagerly ran over its brief contents. While re-perusing it, for she could not tear her eyes from the beloved characters, Lady Ruthven and Helen entered the room. The former hastened forward; the latter trembled as she moved; for she did not yet know the information which her cousin brought. But the first glance of his face told her all was safe; and as he broke from his mother's embrace, to clasp Helen in his arms, she fell upon his neck, and with a shower of tears, whispered, "Wallace lives? Is well?"—"As you would wish him;" re-whispered he; "and with Edward at his feet."—"Thank God, thank God!" As she spoke in a louder tone, Lady Ruthven, with affectionate impatience exclaimed—"But how is our Regent? Speak, Edwin! How is the delight of all hearts?"—"Still the Lord

of Scotland;" answered he; "the invincible dictator of her enemies!—The puissant Edward has acknowledged the power of Sir William Wallace; and after being beaten on the plain of Stanmore, is now making the best of his way towards his own capital."

Lady Mar, again and again, pressed the cold letter of Wallace to her burning bosom:—"The Regent does not mention these matters in his letter to me," said she, casting an exulting glance over the glowing face of Helen. She, without observing it, continued to listen to Edwin, who, with joyous animation, related every particular that had befallen Wallace, from the time of his rejoining him, to that very moment. The Countess heard all with complacency, till he mentioned the issue of the conference with Edward's first embassadors. "Fool!" exclaimed she to herself, "to throw away the golden opportunity that may never return!"—Edwin, not seeing her disturb-

ance, went on with his narrative, every word of which spread the eloquent countenance of Helen with admiration and joy.

Since her heroic heart had wrung from it, all selfish wishes with regard to Wallace, she now allowed herself openly to rejoice in his success; and to look up, unabashed, when the resplendent glories of his character were brought before her. None, but Edwin, made her feel her exclusion from her soul's only home, by dwelling on his gentle virtues; by pourtraying the exquisite tenderness of his nature, which seemed to enfold the objects of his love in his heart of hearts. When Helen thought on these discourses, she would sigh; but it was a sigh of resignation: and she loved to meditate on the words with a serious design, which Edwin had spoken in jest;—that *she made herself a nun for Wallace!* "And so I will;" said she to herself; "and that resolution stills every wild emotion. All is

innocence in Heaven, Wallace! you will there read my soul, and love me as a sister."

In such a frame of mind did she listen to the relation of Edwin; did her animated eye welcome the enthusiastic encomiums of Badenoch and Loch-awe. Then sounded the trumpet; and the herald's voice in the streets proclaimed the victory of the Regent. Lady Mar rushed to the window, as if there she would see himself. Lady Ruthven followed; and as the acclamations of the people echoed through the air, Helen pressing Wallace's precious cross to her heart, hastily left the room to enjoy the rapture of her thoughts in the blessed retirement of her own oratory.

The Countess, in less than an hour, paid an unusual visit to her daughter-in-law's apartment; and on Helen's leaving her closet to know her commands, she learnt that Lord Mar had just informed his wife that the Regent was expected to arrive in the course of a few days. As all

the nobility in Stirling would be present to hail his return, the Countess said, she came to advise her, in consideration of what had passed in the chapel before his departure, not to submit herself to the observation of so many eyes. Lady Helen could not help perceiving that the constant drift of her step-mother was, as much as possible, to prevent her seeing Wallace; but being of too pure a nature to suspect her motive, she calmly answered, that "she would obey her."

This was sufficient for the Countess; she had gained her point. For though she did not seriously think, (what she had affected to believe,) that any thing more had passed between Wallace and Helen than what they had openly declared; yet she could not but discern the harmony of their minds; and she feared that frequent intercourse might draw such sympathy to something dearer. She had understanding to perceive his virtues, but they found no answering qualities in her

breast. The matchless beauty of his person, the penetrating tenderness of his manner, the splendour of his fame, the magnitude of his power, all united to set her impure and ambitious soul in a blaze. Each opposing duty seemed only a vapour through which she could easily pass to the goal of her desires. Hence art of every kind, appeared to her to be no more than a means of acquiring the object most valuable to her in life. Education had not given her any principle by which she might have checked the headlong impulse of her now aroused passions.—Brought up by her mother, a princess of Norway, (who had clandestinely left her father's court, with the Earl of Strathearn;) she gained nothing essentially good from her. That young princess endowed her husband with the sovereignty of the Orkneys, and lived with him there in all the pomp of northern magnificence. But her person and rank were all that was valuable in the union; she was weak and vain, and

unguarded by any fixed ideas of right and wrong. Her daughter, the fair Joanna, inherited her faults with her graces; and came from her hands just as nature had formed her, with no acquired ideas but such as were calculated to give her an arrogant estimation of her own beauty and hereditary consequence. Though distractedly fond of admiration, the Lady Joanna held her charms in too great respect to bestow them on any man beneath the rank of a prince: and while she passed her time in a crowd of gallant knights, all striving who could make themselves most agreeable to this gay and disdainful beauty, her mother died. The young and lovely Countess of Mar, then only two years married, pitying the sorrow of the lately dissipated Joanna, sent over to Kirkwall, to beg the widowed Earl of Strathearn to allow his daughter to pass a few months with her at Braemar. The sprightly graces of youth quickly broke through the clouds of grief. Lady May thought

the variableness of Joanna's feelings excusable in a girl of sixteen; she loved her for her beauty and gaiety:—and, alas, for the frailty of human nature! the earl, her husband, then hardly turned of forty, in the full meridian of manhood and of sensibility; from being interested in the sadness of his fair charge, now became too sensible to the enchantments of her sportive mirth. His Countess's second confinement approached: and as her delicate frame frequently required rest, the lively Joanna was left alone to amuse the Earl. She sang, she danced, she captivated his senses in every possible way. He forgot his wife, his honour, all the world, in the lovely syren;—and hours of lonely converse, in which his enamoured soul poured forth a language, so much more ardent than any she had ever heard before; that she became bewildered, entranced. Instead of revolting at the idea, of the husband of her friend, addressing her with the voice of passion, she only

contemplated her triumph in having rivalled the charms of so beautiful a woman as Lady Mar; and thus, listening day after day to the breath of vice, her soul caught the infection, and she fell. From that moment all her high-flown hopes of a royal union fled. The infatuation of the Earl increased; and while the intoxication of vanity subdued her to his illicit passion, his injured wife brought forth a daughter, and happily died. Before three months expired, the criminal Joanna had awoke from her dream of folly: she found that she had sacrificed her hopes to the silly gratifications of rivalry; she had greedily listened to an adulation which seemed to raise her to divinity, when, in reality, it reduced her to the most abject situation of her sex, and made her a mark for contempt to point at, should ever discovery unveil her conduct to the world. At this crisis, while her soul was torn with scorn of herself, and indignation against the Earl for the advantage he had

taken of her youth and innocence, she found herself in a state which threatened to proclaim her disgrace to every eye. This humbled her at once; and no longer meeting the fond solicitations of the widowed Mar with disdain or reproaches, she yielded to his entreaties, and ere the Countess was four months dead, became his wife. The child, which she soon after brought into the world, died the moment it was born; and every succeeding babe which she carried, met with the same fate, till the birth of those twins, the survivor of which had been saved from a watery grave by Wallace. Ill as Lord Mar had behaved in this transaction, it was his first dereliction from virtue; and his remorse for having betrayed innocence, and, perhaps, by his too apparent infidelity, hastened the death of the most trusting of wives, so wrung his heart, that his continued repentance made such an impression on his young Countess as to excite in her mind some idea of moral

and religious distinctions. To check any rumours to which her prompt marriage, and the early birth of her child, might have given rise, she persuaded her husband to take her over to France; where, throwing off all her gaiety, and assuming a demeanour, which she thought more becoming her royal descent, she resided several years. Gratified by the admiration which such gravity in one so young, called forth, she changed her ambition for pre-eminence in beauty, to that of being deemed a model of conjugal decorum, and of every majestic grace which belongs to princely blood. With this character she returned to Scotland. She found the suspicion of her former indiscretion faded from all minds; and passing her time in the stately hospitalities of her lord's castles, conducted herself with a matronly dignity that made him the envy of all the married chieftains in the kingdom. Soon after her arrival, she took the Lady Helen from her grandfather at

Thirlestane; where both children had been left on the departure of their father and his bride for France. Though hardly passed the period of absolute childhood, the Lord Soulis at this time offered the young heiress of Mar his hand. The Countess had then no interest in wishing the union, therefore she permitted her daughter-in-law to decide as she pleased. A second time he presented himself, and Lady Mar still indifferent, allowed Helen a second time to refuse him.—Years flew over the heads of the once guilty pair; but while they whitened the raven locks of the Earl, and withered his manly brow; the beauty of his Countess, blew into fuller luxuriance. Yet it was her mirror alone, that told her she was fairer than all the ladies around; for none durst invade the severe decorum of her manners with so light a whisper. Such was her state when she first heard of the rise of Sir William Wallace: and when she thought that her husband, by joining him, might

not only lose his life, but risk the forfeiture of his family honours,—for her own sake, and for her children, she determined, if it were necessary, to make the outlawed chief a sacrifice. To this end she became willing to bribe Soulis's participation in her scheme, by the hand of Helen. She knew that her daughter-in-law abhorred his character; but love, indifference, or hatred, she thought of little consequence in a marriage which brought sufficient antidotes in rank and wealth. She had never felt what real love was; and her personal vanity being no longer agitated by the raptures of a frantic lover, she now lived tranquilly with Lord Mar. What then was her astonishment, what the wild distraction of her heart, when she first beheld Sir William Wallace; and found in her breast for him, all which, in the moment of the most unreflecting intoxication, she had ever felt for her lord; with the addition of feelings and sentiments, the existence of which she had never be-

lieved, but now knew in all their force?—Love, for the first time, penetrated through every nerve of her body, and possessed her whole mind. Taught a theory of virtue by her husband, she was startled at wishes which militated against his honour; but no principles being grounded in her mind, they soon disappeared before the furious charge of her passions; and after a short struggle, she surrendered herself to the lawless power of a guilty and ambitious love. Wishes, hopes, and designs, which, two years before she would have shuddered at, as not only sinful, but derogatory to female delicacy, she now embraced with ardour; and nought seemed dreadful to her but disappointment. The prolonged life of Lord Mar cost her many tears; for the master passions of her nature, which she had laid asleep on her marriage with the Earl, broke out with redoubled violence at the sight of Wallace. His was the most perfect of manly forms; and she loved: he was great; and her

ambition blazed into an unextinguishable flame. These two strong passions meeting in a breast weakened by the crime of her youth, their rule was absolute; and neither virtue, honour, nor humanity, could stand before them. Her husband was abhorred, her son forgotten, and nothing but Wallace and a crown could find a place in her thoughts.

Helen, not apprehending any one of the occult devices which were working in her step-mother's heart, when she came to exhort her against being present at the triumphal reception of Wallace, meekly acquiesced, and retired once more to her closet, with this sentiment;—" I, who know the heroism of his soul, need not pageants, nor acclamations of the multitude, to tell me what he is.—He is already too bright for my senses to support; and with his image pressing on my heart, it is mercy to let me shrink from his too-glorious presence!"

CHAP. XVII.

THE few chieftains who had remained on their estates, during the suspense before the battle, thinking that if the issue proved unfavourable they should be safest amongst their native glens, now came with numerous trains to greet the return of their victorious Regent. The ladies brought forth their most splendid apparels, and the houses of Stirling were hung with tapestry, to hail with due respect the benefactor of the land.

At last the hour arrived, when a messenger, whom Lord Mar had sent out for the purpose, returned on full speed with information that the Regent was passing the Carron. At these tidings, the animated old Earl called out his retinue,

mounted his coal-black steed, and ordered a sumptuous charger to be caparisoned with housings wrought in gold by the hands of Lady Mar and her ladies. This horse was intended to meet Wallace, and to bring him into the city. Edwin led it forward. And behind the earls Mar and Badenoch, came all the chieftains of the country, in gallant array. Their ladies on splendid palfreys, followed the superb car of the Countess of Mar; and preceding the multitudes of Stirling, left the town a desert.—Not a living being seemed now within its walls, excepting the Southron prisoners, assembled on the top of the citadel to view the return of their conqueror.

Helen remained in Snawdoun, believing that she was the only soul left in that vast palace. She sat musing on the extraordinary fate of Wallace; a few months ago a despised outlaw, at this moment the idol of the nation!—And then turning to herself; the wooed of

many a gallant heart; and now devoted to one, who, like the sun, she must ever contemplate with admiration, while he should pass on above her sphere, unconscious of the devotion which filled her soul.

The distant murmur of the populace, thronging out of the streets towards the Carse, gradually subsided, and at last she was left in profound silence. "He must be near," thought she; "he whose smile is more precious to me than the adulation of all the world besides, now smiles upon every one! All look upon him, all hear him but I—and I—Ah, Wallace, did Marion love thee dearer?" As her devoted heart demanded this question, her tender and delicate soul shrunk within herself, and deeply blushing, she hid her face in her hands. A pause of a few minutes;—and a sound as if the skies were rent, tore the air; a noise like the distant roar of the sea succeeded; and soon after, the shouts of an approaching

multitude shook the palace to its foundations. Helen started on her feet; the tumult of voices augmented; the sound of coming squadrons thundered over the ground. At this instant every bell in the city began its peals;—and the door of Helen's room suddenly opened—Lady Ruthven hurried in. "Helen," cried she, "I would not disturb you before; but as you were to be absent, I would not make one in Lady Mar's train; and I come to enjoy with you the return of our beloved Regent!"

Helen did not speak, but her eloquent countenance amply told her aunt what were the emotions of her heart; and Lady Ruthven taking her hand, attempted to draw her towards an oriel window which opened to a view of the high-street; but Helen, shrinking from the movement, begged to be excused.—"I hear enough," said she, "my dear aunt; sights like these overcome me; let me remain where I am."

Lady Ruthven was going to remonstrate, when the loud huzzas of the people and soldiers, accompanied by acclamations of "*Long live victorious Wallace, our Prince and King!*" struck Helen, half fainting, back into her seat, and Lady Ruthven darting towards the window, cried aloud, "He comes, Helen, he comes!—His bonnet off his noble brow—Oh! how princely does he look!—And now he bows—Ah, they shower flowers upon him from the houses on each side of the street;—how sweetly he smiles and bows to the ladies as they lean from their windows! Come, Helen, come, if you would see the perfection of majesty and modesty united in one!"

Helen did not move, but Lady Ruthven, stretching out her arm, plucked her off her chair, and in a moment had drawn her within view of Wallace. Helen saw him attended as a conqueror and a king; but with the eyes of a benefactor and a brother he looked on all around. The

very memory of war seemed to vanish before his presence, for all there was love and gentleness. Helen drew a quick sigh, and closing her eyes, dropped against the arras. She now heard the buzz of many voices, the rolling peal of acclamations, but she distinguished nothing; her senses were in tumults; and had not Lady Ruthven, by an accidental glance, discovered her disorder, she would have fallen motionless to the floor. The good matron was not so forgetful of the feelings of a virtuous youthful heart, not to have discovered something of what was passing in that of her niece. From the moment in which she suspected that Wallace had made a serious impression there, she dropped all trifling with his name. And now that she saw the distressing effects of that impression, with revulsed feelings she took the fainting Helen in her arms, and laying her on a couch, by the aid of volatiles, soon restored her to recollection. Seeing her

quite recovered, she made no observation on this emotion; and Helen leaned her head, and wept upon the bosom of her aunt. Lady Ruthven's tears silently mingled with hers; but she said within herself, "Wallace cannot be always insensible to so much sweetness!"

As the acclaiming populace passed the palace in their way to the citadel, whither they were escorting their Regent, Helen remained quiet in her leaning position; but when the noise died away into hoarse murmurs, she raised her head, and glancing on the tear-bathed face of her affectionate aunt, said, with a forced smile, "My more than mother, fear me not! I am grateful to Sir William Wallace; I venerate him as the Southrons do their St. George; but I need not your tender pity." As she spoke, her beautiful lip quivered, but her voice was steady. "My sweetest Helen," replied Lady Ruthven, "how can I pity her, for whom I hope every thing!" "Hope nothing for me;" return-

ed Helen, understanding by her looks what her tongue had left unsaid; "but to see me a vestal here, and a saint in Heaven."—"What can my Helen mean?" replied Lady Ruthven; "Who would talk of being a vestal with such a heart in view as that of the Regent of Scotland? and that it will be yours, does not his eloquent gratitude declare?" "No; my aunt," answered Helen, casting down her eyes; "gratitude is eloquent, where love would be silent. I am not so sacrilegious as to wish that Sir William Wallace should transfer that heart to me which the blood of Marion for ever purchased. No; should these people compel him to be their king, I will retire to some monastery, and for ever devote myself to God, and to prayers for my country."

The holy composure which spread over the countenance and figure of Helen as she uttered this, seemed to extend itself to the before eager mind of Lady Ruthven; she pressed her tenderly in her

arms, and kissing her; "Gentlest of human beings!" cried she, "whatever be thy lot, it must be happy." "Whatever it be," answered Helen, "I know that there is an Almighty reason for it: I shall understand it in the world to come, and I cheerfully acquiesce in this."—"Oh! that the ears of Wallace could hear thee!" cried Lady Ruthven. "They will, sometime, my gracious aunt," answered she with an angelic smile.—"When? where? dearest!" asked Lady Ruthven, hoping that she began to have fairer anticipations for herself. Helen answered not, but pointing to the sky, rose from her seat with an air as if she were really going to ascend to those regions which seemed best fitted to receive her pure spirit. Lady Ruthven gazed on her in speechless admiration; and without a word, or an impeding motion, saw Helen softly kiss her hand to her, and with another seraphic smile, glide gently from her into her closet, and close the door.

Far different were the emotions which agitated the bosoms of every person present at the entry of Sir William Wallace. All but himself regarded it as the triumph of the King of Scotland; and while some of the nobles exulted in their future monarch, the major part felt the dæmon of envy so possess their souls, that they who, before his arrival, were ready to worship his name, now looked on the empire with which he seemed to ride, borne on the hearts of the people, with a rancorous jealousy, which, from that moment, vowed his humiliation or the fall of Scotland. The very tongues, which in the general acclaim called loudest, "*Long live our King*," belonged to those who, in the secret recesses of their souls, swore to work his ruin, and to make these full-blown honours the means of his destruction. He, in vain, had tried to check, what his moderate desires deemed the extravagant gratitude of the people; but finding his efforts only excited still

louder demonstrations of their love; and knowing himself immoveable in his resolution to remain a subject of the crown; he rode on composedly towards the citadel.

Those ladies who had not retired from the cavalcade, to hail their Regent a second time from their windows, preceded him, in Lady Mar's train, to the hall, where she had caused a sumptuous feast to be spread to greet his arrival. Two seats were placed under a canopy of cloth of gold at the head of the board. The Countess stood there, in all the splendour of her ideal rank; and would have seated Wallace in the royal chair on her right hand, but he drew back;—"I am only a guest in this citadel;" returned he; "and it would ill become me, to take place of the master of the banquet." As he spoke, he looked on Lord Mar, who understanding the language of his eyes, which never said the thing he would not, without a word took the kingly seat; and so disappointed the

Countess, who, by this refusal, still found herself as no more than the governor of Stirling's wife; when, she had hoped, that a compliance with her cunning arrangement, would have hinted to all, that she was to be the future queen of their acknowledged sovereign. They who knew Wallace, saw his unshaken resolution in this apparently slight action: but others, who read his design in their own ambition, translated it differently; and deemed it, only an artful rejection of the appendages of royalty, to excite the impatience of the people to crown him in reality.

As the ladies took their seats at the board, Edwin, who stood by the chair of his beloved lord, whispered, "Our Helen is not here."

Lady Mar overheard the name of Helen, but she could not distinguish Wallace's reply; and fearing that some second assignation, of more happy termination than that of the chapel, might be de-

signed, she determined, that if Edwin were to be the bearer of a secret correspondence between the man she loved, and the daughter she hated, to deprive them speedily of so ready an assistant.

CHAP. XVIII.

IN the collected council the following day, the Earl of March made his treacherous request: and Wallace, trusting his vehement oaths of fidelity, (because he thought that the versatile earl had now discovered his true interest,) granted him, without suspicion, charge of the Lothians. The lords Athol and Buchan, were not backward in offering their services to the Regent; and the rest of the discontented nobles, following the base example, with equal deceit bade him

command their lives and fortunes. While asseverations of loyalty filled the walls of the council-hall; and the lauding rejoicings of the people still sounded from without, all spoke of security and confidence to Wallace; and never, perhaps, did he think himself so absolute in the heart of Scotland, as at the very moment when three-fourths of its nobility were plotting his destruction.

Lord Loch-awe knew his influence in the minds of the bravest chieftains. From the extent of his territories, and his tried valour, he might well have assumed the title of his great ancestor, and been called King of woody Morven; but he was content with a patriarch's sway over so many valiant clans; and previous to the Regent's appearance in the council-hall, he opened his intentions to the assembled lords. Some, assented with real satisfaction; the rest readily acquiesced in what they had laid so sure a plan to circumvent.

Wallace soon after entered; and Loch-awe rising, stood forth, and in a long and persuasive speech, once more declared the wishes of the nation that he would strike the decisive blow on the pretensions of Edward, by himself accepting the crown. The bishop of Dunkeld, with all the eloquence of learning, and the most animated devotion to the interest of Scotland, seconded the petition. Mar and Bothwell enforced it. The disaffected lords thought proper to throw in their conjurations also; and every voice, but that of Badenoch, poured forth fervent entreaties that he would grant the prayers of the supplicating nation.

Wallace rose, and every tongue was mute: "My gratitude to Scotland, increases with my life; but my answer must still be the same—I cannot be its king."

At these words the venerable Loch-awe threw himself on his knees before him; "In my person," cried he, "see Scotland at your feet! still bleeding with the ef-

fects of former struggles for empire, she would throw off all claims but those of virtue, and receive as her anointed sovereign, her father and deliverer! She has no more arguments to deliver: these are her prayers; and thus I offer them."

"Kneel not to me, brave Loch-awe!" cried Wallace; "nor believe that the might of these victories lies so thoroughly in this arm, that I dare outrage its Maker? Were I to comply with your wishes, I should disobey Him who has hitherto made me his happy agent; and how could I guard my kingdom from his vengeance? Your rightful King yet lives; he is an alien from his country, but Heaven may return him to your prayers. Meanwhile, as his representative, as your soldier and protector, I shall be blest in wearing out my life. My ancestors were ever faithful to the blood of Alexander, and in the same fidelity I will die."

The firmness with which he spoke, and the determined expression of his noble

countenance, convinced Loch-awe that he was not to be shaken; and rising from his knee, he bowed in silence. March whispered to Buchan, "Behold the hypocrite! But we will unmask him. He thinks to blind us to his towering ambition, by this affected moderation. He will not be called a king, because, with our crown, certain limitations are laid on the prerogative; but he will be our Regent, that he may be our dictator; and every day demand gratitude for voluntary services, which, performed as a king, could only be considered as his duty."

These sentiments, when the council broke up, were actively disseminated amongst the disaffected throng: each gloomy recess in the woods, murmured with seditious meetings; while every lip in the country at large, breathed the name of Wallace as they would have done a god's; and the land that he had blessed, bloomed on every hill and valley like a garden.

Stirling now exhibited a constant carnival; peace was in every heart, and joy its companion. As Wallace had commanded in the field, he decided in the judgment-hall; and while all his behests were obeyed with a promptitude which kept the machine of state constantly moving in the most beautiful order, his bitterest enemies could not but secretly acknowledge the perfection they were determined to destroy.

His munificent hand stretched itself far and near, that all who had shared the sufferings of Scotland, might drink largely of her prosperity. The good abbot of Scone was invited from his hermitage; and when he heard from the embassadors sent to him, that the brave young warrior whom he had entertained, was the resistless Wallace, he no longer thought of the distant and supine Bruce, but centered every wish for his country in the authority of her deliverer. A few days brought him to Stirling; and wishing to remain

near the most constant residence of his noble friend, he requested, that instead of being restored to Scone, he might be installed in the vacant monastery of Cambus-Kenneth. Wallace gladly acquiesced; and the venerable abbot being told that his late charge, the Lady Helen, was in the palace, went to visit her next day; and as he communicated his exultation and happiness, she rejoiced in the benedictions which his grateful spirit invoked on the head of her almost worshipped sovereign. Her heart gave him this title, which she believed, the not to be repressed affection of the people, would at last force him to assume.

The wives and families of his brave Lanerkers, were brought from Loch Doine, and again planted in their native vallies; and nought in the kingdom appeared different from its most prosperous days, but the widowed heart of the dispenser of all this good. And yet, so fully did he engage himself in the creation

of these benefits, that no time seemed left to him for regrets; but they haunted him like persecuting spirits, invisible to all but himself.

During the performance of these things, the Countess of Mar, though apparently lost to all other pursuits than the peaceable enjoyment of her reflected dignities, was absorbed in the one great object of her passion; and eager to be rid of so dangerous a spy and adversary as she deemed Edwin to be, she was labouring day and night to effect by clandestine schemes his banishment, when an unforeseen circumstance carried him far away. Lord Ruthven, being on an embassy to the Orkneys, had fallen ill: as his disorder was attended with extreme danger, he sent for his wife; and Edwin, impelled by love for his father, and anxiety to sooth the terrified suspense of his mother, readily left the side of his friend to accompany her to the isles. Lady Mar had now no scrutinizing eye to fear:

her nephew Murray was still on duty in Clydesdale; the Earl, her husband, trusted her too implicitly, ever to turn on her a suspicious look; and Helen, she contrived, should be as little in her presence as possible.

Busy as she was, the enemies of the Regent were not less active in the prosecution of their plans. The Earl of March had arrived at Dunbar; and having dispatched his treasonable proposals to Edward, had received letters from that monarch by sea, accepting his services, and promising every reward that could satisfy his ambition, and the cupidity of those whom he could draw over to his cause. The wary King then told the earl, that if he would send his wife and family to London as hostages for his faith, he was ready to bring a mighty army to Dunbar, and by that gate, once more enter Scotland. These negociations backwards and forward, from London to Dunbar, and from Dunbar to the treacherous lords at

Stirling, occupied much time; and the more, as great precaution was necessary to escape the vigilant eyes of Wallac which seemed to be present in every pa of the kingdom at once; for, so carefu was he in overlooking, by his well chose officers, civil and military, every trans action, that the slightest derelictio from the straight order of things was im mediately seen and examined into. Man of these trusty magistrates having bee placed in the Lothians before March too the government, he could not now remov them without exciting suspicion; an therefore, as they remained, great cir cumspection was used to elude thei watchfulness.

From the time that Edward had agai entered into terms with the Scottish chie tains, Lord March sent regular tidings t Lord Soulis of the progress of their nego- ciation. He knew that nobleman would gladly welcome the recal of the King of England; for ever since the revolution in

favour of Scotland, he had remained obstinately shut up within his castle of Hermitage. Chagrin at having lost Helen, was not the least of his mortifications; and the wounds he had received from the invisible hand which had released her, having been given with all the might of the valiant arm which directed the blow, were not even now healed; his passions kept them still inflamed; and their smart made his vengeance burn the fiercer against Wallace, who, he now learnt, was the mysterious agent of her rescue.

While treason secretly prepared to spring its mine beneath the feet of the Regent, he, unsuspicious that any could be discontented where all were free and prosperous, thought of no enemy to the tranquil fulfilment of his duties, but the minor persecutions of Lady Mar. No day escaped without bringing him letters, either to invite him to Snawdoun, or to lead her to the citadel, where he resided. In every one of these epistles, she declared

that it was no longer the wildness of passion which impelled her to seek his society, but the moderated regard of a friend. And though perfectly aware of all that was behind these asseverations, (for she had deceived him once into a belief of this plea, and had made him feel its falseness) he found himself forced at times, out of the common civility due to her sex, to comply with her invitations. Indeed her conduct never gave him reason to hold her in any higher respect, for whenever they happened to be left alone, her behaviour exhibited any thing but the chaste affection to which she made pretensions. The frequency of these scenes, at last made him never go to Snawdoun unaccompanied, (for she rarely allowed him to have even a glimpse of Helen) and by this precaution he avoided much of her solicitations. But, strange to say, even at the time that this conduct, by driving her to despair, almost excited her to some desperate act; her

wayward heart threw the blame of his coldness upon her trammels with Lord Mar; and flattering herself that, were he dead, all would happen as she wished, she panted for that hour with an impatience which often tempted her to precipitate the event.

Things were in this situation when Wallace one night was hastily summoned from his pillow by a page of Lord Mar's, requesting him immediately to repair to his chamber. Concluding that something alarming must have happened, to occasion so extraordinary a summons, he threw on his Gambeson, and plaid, and entered the apartments of the governor. Mar met him with a countenance the herald of a dreadful matter. "What has happened?" inquired Wallace. "Treason," answered Mar, "but from what point I cannot guess: my daughter has braved a midnight and lonely walk from Snawdoun, to bring the proofs." As he spoke he led the chief into the room where Helen sat.

Her long hair, disordered by the winds of the night, mingled with the grey folds of the mantle which envelopped her. He hastened forward—she no longer flitted before him, scared away from his approach by the frowning glances of her step-mother. He had once attempted to express his grateful sentiments of what she had suffered in her lovely person for his sake, but the Countess interrupted him, and Helen disappeared. Now he beheld her in a presence, where he could declare all his gratitude, without subjecting its gentle object to one harsh word in consequence; and almost forgetting his errand to the governor, and the tidings he had just heard, he remembered only the manner in which she had shielded his life with her arms; and as she rose as he drew near, he bent his knee respectfully before her. Blushing and silent, she extended her hand to him to rise. He pressed it warmly, " Sweet excellence!" said he, " I am happy in this opportunity,

however gained, again to pour out my acknowledgments to you; and though I have been denied that pleasure until now, yet the memory of your generous interest in the friend of your father, is one of the most cherished sentiments of my heart."

"It is my own happiness, as well as my duty, Sir William Wallace," replied she, "to regard you and my country as one: and that I hope will excuse the, perhaps, unsexual action of this night?" As she spoke, he again gently pressed her hand, and rising, looked at Lord Mar for further explanation.

The Earl held a roll of vellum towards him. "This writing," said he, "was found to-night by my daughter. She was enjoying with my wife and other ladies a moon-light walk on the shores of the Forth, behind the palace: when, having strayed at some distance from her friends, she had an opportunity of examining uninterruptedly this packet, which she saw lying in the path before her, as if it had

just been dropt. It bore no direction, she therefore opened the cover; and part of the contents, soon told her that she must conceal the whole till she could reveal them to me. Not even to my wife did she intrust the dangerous secret; nor would she run any risk of accidents by sending it by a messenger. As soon as the family were gone to rest, she wrapped herself in her plaid, and finding a passage through one of the low embrasures of Snawdoun, with a fleet step made her way to the citadel and to me. She gave me the packet; read it, my brave friend, and judge if we do not owe much to Heaven for so critical a discovery."

Wallace took the scroll, and read as follows:

"Our trusty fellows will bring you this, and deliver copies of the same to the rest. As we shall be with you in four-and-twenty hours after it arrives, you need not return us an answer. The army of our liege lord is now in the Lothians;

and passes through those cheated counties, under the appellation of succours for the Regent, from the Orkney Isles. Keep all safe, and neither himself nor any of his adherents shall have a head on their shoulders by this day week."

Neither superscription, name, nor date, was to this letter; but Wallace immediately knew the hand writing to be that of Lord March. "Then we must have traitors, even within these walls!" exclaimed Mar; "none but the most powerful chiefs, would the proud Cospatrick admit into his conspiracies: and what are we to do? for by to-morrow's evening, the army this traitor has let into the heart of the country, will be at our gates!"

"No," cried Wallace, "thanks to God and this guardian angel," fervently clasping her hand as he spoke, "we are not to be intimidated by treachery! Let us but be faithful ourselves, my veteran friend, and all will go well. It matters

not who the other traitors are; they will soon discover themselves, and shall find us prepared to counteract their machinations. Blow your trumpet, my lord, to summon the heads of your council."

Helen at this command arose; but Wallace replacing her in her chair, "Stay, Lady Helen," said he, "let the sight of such virgin delicacy, braving the terrors of the night to warn betrayed Scotland, nerve every heart with redoubled courage to breast this insidious foe!" Helen did indeed feel her soul awake to all its ancient patriotic enthusiasm; and thus with a countenance pale, but resplendent with the light of her thoughts, she sat, the angel of heroic inspiration. Wallace often turned to look on her, while her eyes, unconscious of the adoring admiration which spoke in their beams, followed his godlike figure as it moved through the room, with a step that declared the undisturbed determination of his soul.

The lords Bothwell, Loch-awe, and

Badenoch, were the first that obeyed the call. They started at sight of Helen; but Wallace, in a few words, related the cause of her appearance; and the portentous letter was laid before them. All were acquainted with the hand-writing of Lord March; and all agreed in attributing to its real motive, his late solicitude to obtain the command of the Lothians; "What!" cried Bothwell, "but to open his castle-gates to the enemy!"

"And to repel him before he reaches ours, my brave chiefs," replied Wallace, "I have summoned you! Edward will not make this attempt without tremendous powers. He knows what he risks; his men, his life, and his honour. We must therefore expect a stand adequate to his danger. Lose not then a moment; even to-night, this instant, go out, and bring in your followers; I will call up mine from the banks of the Clyde, and be ready to meet him ere he crosses the Carron."

While he gave these orders, other no-

bles thronged in; and Helen, as the story of her conduct was repeated, being severally thanked by them all, became so agitated, that, stretching out her hand to Wallace, who was nearest to her, she softly whispered, "Take me hence." He read in her blushing face the oppression which her modesty sustained in such a scene; and with faltering steps she leaned upon his arm, as he conducted her to an interior chamber. When Helen entered, overcome by her former fears, and the emotions of the last hour, sunk into a chair, and burst into tears. Wallace stood over her: as he looked on her, he thought, "If ought on earth ever resembled the beloved of my soul, it is Helen Mar!" And all the tenderness which memory gave to his ever-adored wife, and all the grateful complacency with which he regarded Helen, beamed at once from his eyes. She raised her head,—she felt that look,—it thrilled to her soul. For a moment every former thought seemed lost

in the one perception, that he then gazed on her as he had never looked on any woman since his Marion. Was she then beloved?

The impression was evanescent: "No, no!" said she to herself; and waving her hand gently to him, with her head bent down; "Leave me, Sir William Wallace.—Forgive me—but I am exhausted; my frame is weaker than my mind." She spoke this at intervals; and Wallace respectfully touching the hand she extended, pressed it to his breast. "I obey you, dear Lady Helen; and when next we meet, it will be, I hope, to dispel every fear in that gentle bosom; and to say, that Heaven has again blest the arms of Scotland!" With a beating heart she bowed her head without looking up; and Wallace left the room.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

NOTES

TO THE THIRD VOLUME OF

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

([a] p. 7.) This historical fact relating to Stirling bridge is yet exultingly repeated on the spot; and the number of the Southrons who fell beneath the arms of so small a band of Scots, is not less the theme of triumph.

([b] p. 11.) The *Pryse* were the notes sounded, in hunting, at the death of the game.

([c] p. 11.) It is recorded that the memory of Cressingham was so odious to the Scots, that they did indeed, flay his dead body, and made saddles and girths and other things of his skin.

([d] p. 30.) The arms of Hilton are, argent, two barrs azure.

([e] p. 83.) Edward intended to send out forces to Guienne under the command of Humphrey Earl of Hereford, the constable, and Roger Earl of Norfolk, the marshal of England, when these two powerful nobles refused to execute his commands. A violent altercation ensued; and the King, in the heighth of his passion, exclaimed to the constable, "Sir Earl, by God, you shall either go or hang." "By God, Sir King, (replied Hereford) I will neither go nor hang." And he immediately departed with the marshal and their respective trains.

([f] p. 89.) "The men of Israel said unto Gideon, rule then over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."——Judges, chap. viii.

In my references to particular scripture passages in these volumes, I usually quote from memory. The sense, therefore is generally preserved, though not always in the exact words of the original text. I preferred this mode, as the most natural in familiar discourse.

([g] p. 112.) *Gentlest* is here used in the Scottish and old English sense; meaning of the *noblest blood.*

([h] p. 136.) All who are conversant with the traditionary accounts of the ancient Scottish manners, must be well acquainted with these barbarous customs. They were employed to perpetuate a ferocity against their enemies, similar to that which was inculcated, by resembling means, into the young Hannibal.

([i] p. 147.) *Deeds shaw* is one of the honourable mottoes worn by the present head of the noble house of Ruthven.

([k] p. 164.) Lord Aymer de Valence was Earl of Pembroke; but being first known in Scotland by his family name, he was never in that kingdom, called by any other title.

([l] p. 182.) *Cloth of Baudkins* was one of the richest stuffs worn in the thirteenth century. It is said to have been composed of silk interwoven with gold in the most sumptuous manner. According to *Du Cange*, it derived its name from *Baldack*, the modern appellation for *Babylon*, where, it is reported, it was first manufactured. *Wimple* was a head-dress of the times; it resembled a veil, not worn flowing, but in curious folds upon the head. The *Carkanet* was a large, broad necklace of precious stones of all colours, set in

various shapes, and fastened by gold links to each other.

([m] p. 222.) The ruins of this tower are still visible; and near to them the people of the country point out the place where Wallace encamped his brave army.

([n] p. 227.) Several of these vaulted residences may now be seen in Crawford moor. Tradition informs us of the use to which they were applied. Not only the poor outraged people thus found shelter in the bosom of their mother earth, but the cattle also.

([o] p. 235.) There are hills in Annandale and Clydesdale, called *Watches*, where persons in old times were stationed to give different signals appointed by their commanders. These notices were communicated with wonderful rapidity by smoke in the day, and flame at night.

([p] p. 263.) Gideon was a character held in such respect by Wallace, that he seems to have regarded him as an exemplar. Gideon's was a patriot's sword, and Heaven blessed his arms. The reference to Gideon in this reply, corresponds with that in page 89 in this volume.

([q] p. 267.) To throw a spear, was a ...cient mode of denouncing war.

([r] p. 271.) Wallace's rejection of King Edward's splendid offers, is noted by the old British historians, and the substance of his answer is particularly recorded.

([s] p. 289.) Alexander III. was killed in this manner on the 18th of April 1290; just seven years before the consequent calamities of his country made it necessary for Wallace to rise in its defence. Holinshed gives a circumstantial account of Thomas of Learmont's (or as the translator of Hector Boetius names him, Thomas of Ercildown) prophecy of this event.

([t] p. 294.) The fine ruins of Kilchurn castle are still to be seen on a rocky point, projecting into Lochawe. The lofty Ben Cruachan rises immediately behind the castle in stupendous grandeur.

([u] p. 311.) Hunting tower, a castle of the Lords Ruthven, in the near neighbourhood of Perth, is still a fine structure. It consists of two square towers connected by other buildings. Much of it is in ruins, but the banquetting-hall is discoverable. The situation is delightful; and every acre about it, is heroically consecrated ground.

([x] p. 321.) The mountain from which this beacon sent its ray has, from that hour, been called *Tinto* or *Tintoc*, (which signifies *the hill of fire;*) and is yet regarded by the country people with a devotion almost idolatrous. Its height is about 2260 feet from the sea. Not far from *Tinto*, at Biggar, the spot is shewn which was Wallace's camp.

([y] p. 325.) Roy cross, was erected on the heath of Stanmore, (a stony tract between Richmondshire and Cumberland) by William the First of England, and Malcolm III. of Scotland, as the boundary mark of their separate domains.

([z] p. 341.) The name by which Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March, was familiarly called.

J. M'Creery, Printer,
Black-Horse-Court, Fleet-Street,
London.

ERRATA. Vol. iii.

Page 13, line, 17, *after* given *read* us
16, — 1, *after* load, *place a* parenthesis
210, — 1, *for* fictious *read* licentious